

# **Horizon**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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**PROLOGUE TO PLANNING**

*by* J. B. PRIESTLEY

**FUNDAMENTAL REALITIES**

*by* H. G. WELLS

**A MESSAGE TO THE FISH**

*by* T. S. ELIOT

WAR SYMPOSIUM:

(iii) **OURS NOT TO REASON WHY**

*by* A PRIVATE

**LETTER FROM FRANCE**

ANONYMOUS

**ABNORMALITY**

*by* DIANA WITHERBY

**TOUCHING AMERICA**

*by* LOUIS MACNEICE

**HERBERT READ**

*by* GRAHAM GREENE

*by* D. S. SAVAGE, LOUIS MACNEICE, AND KENNETH ALLOTT

*by* GEORGE ORWELL, WILLIAM EMPSON, AND GWEN MARSH

*DRAWINGS by* HENRY MOORE

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***Edited by Cyril Connolly***

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# COMMENT

INVASION and You! As I write these words I hear on unexceptionable authority that the enemy is on his way, following that route, old as the seasons, by which he has brought off all his most audacious infiltrations. He landed at Europe's extreme south, the sandy scab of the Punto de Tarifa, and began at once a pincer movement round the Atlantic and the Mediterranean seaboard, with a central thrust up the valley of the Guadalquivir. The corkwoods of Algeciras, the cottonfields of Estepona, the blue sugar canes and custard apples of Almuñecar were the first to be penetrated, and he reached those botanists' paradises, the Sierra de Aracena and the Sierra de Monchique in the west at the same time as he encircled, on the east, the Contraviesa and the Gadór. The villages with their moorish walls, their goats and their aloes, surrendered on their hill-tops. The provincial capitals fell soon after, Huelva, Cadiz, Seville, Granada, Almeria, Malaga, Jaen and Córdoba, all of Andalusia along the river till the green corn sprouted on the white soil, the Sierra Morena became a waste of flowering cistus, and Castille and Estremadura were threatened, till even the places with the coldest names, Fregenal, Tembleque, Javalambre, surrendered, and the Duke of Frias betrayed his name. And what has happened in the Peninsula will happen in France: the country is ripe for it, all resistance undermined, the asphodel blossoms are frothing over the Eastern Pyrenees, the catkins are on the willows, the poplars of the west are covering their balls of mistletoe, the chestnut buds and the café tables have reached to the Loire. We have only a fortnight at the longest to prepare against the malice and ingenuity of our hereditary enemy, the unsound, unprogressive, uneconomical, unpatriotic, unmechanised, non-belligerent Spring. 'Make no mistake about it,' said a High Official who in his free time is a Military Spokesman, 'Spring will try us hard, but, buttressed in this island bastion, we will withstand him. The enemy will use gas. "Aires, vernal aires", "Banks of violets", "Delicious South". We have a filter for all of them. "April is the cruellest month." Green grass, blue sky, white clouds, prim-roses; everything will be tried that may distract our attention and sap our resolve. Don't look at 'em. Wear dark glasses. Stay put. What did Gamelin say to Ironside? "Pas bouger!" Stay put!



"And bacteriological warfare?" "Ah yes, Spring fever, glad you mentioned it, very important. When you get that balmy feeling, false sense of well-being or euphoria, young man's fancy, desire to receive or bestow affection, crowd roads and railways, change domicile; don't give way. If it gets too strong consult your Mr. Sensible. And remember, now as always: win the Spring is win the war. We know what short shrift was meted out to the guzzlers in restaurants, now is the time to punish mental and emotional guzzling. We have got the measure of the food hog. We must destroy the day dreamer, the memory hoarder, the escapist, the beauty-wallah, the reading man. Then and then only, bastioned in this island buttress, will we be totally conditioned to total war, and when victory is ours, when the war has swept the world, when nobody anywhere gets more to eat than the poorest Spaniard or the most starving Chinese, when nobody can read or write, when nobody has anything, nobody wants anything, nobody does anything except work, work, work—when we've got the race war, the class war, the age war, the sex war, going simultaneously, when you look back at to-day as the happiest period of your life, and when happiness is recognised everywhere as what it is, a dull and dishonest evasion of necessary pain, when we have reduced humanity to its lowest denominator—then the sacrifices we have made in conditioning ourselves against the daffodil and the blackbird will not have been worthless. "Good-morning. Stay Put." "Good-morning. Go to it"."

One of the pleasures of living in London is that one can write such paragraphs as these with a clear conscience. For, as in the Spanish war, some writers in London felt guilty at not being in Spain, and writers in Barcelona at not being in Madrid, now they are uneasy at not being in London, where History (the new name for Nemesis) is being so uncomfortably made.

Thus Auden begins a review of Laski's *Where do we go from here?* 'In view of what the author and his fellow countrymen are now enduring in the defence of civilization, a certain impudence attaches to any criticism by someone who is not sharing their suffering.' This is regrettable; what is the use of Auden's changing his nationality if he is going to feel like that? Supposing the contents of *Horizon* were judged, not on their literary merit but by the amount of suffering the contributors

endured! This attitude reveals all the tortuosities of the expatriate conflict (a conflict, incidentally, which invariably centres round Auden and Isherwood, which completely neglects Wyndham Lewis, Mrs. Miniver, Hilton, Cronin, I. A. Richards, the much larger quantity of actors and sportsmen, and the largest contingent still, the playboys, hostesses, ladies of title and so on). Let them all come back and dig potatoes! And what about Norman Douglas? He's over seventy, but what excuse is that for sitting in the sun somewhere in unoccupied France? Outrageous! His work will suffer! And what about the writers who, although in England, are in safe areas? Are they not just as bad as expatriates? The only difference between an expatriate and an evacuee is that one has got a bit further. And what of those writers in London, here under the very arc-lamp of History, who are wishing they were somewhere else? Probe them out, take their names, send them to *Horizon*. History will deal with them.

The magazine in which Auden is writing is called *Decision*, edited by Klaus Mann in New York, and the first number has just appeared. It aims at blending the art of the refugees with that of American writers. It is interesting, but, oddly enough, to English eyes the first number seems dated, suggesting Huxley's *Vogue Period*, and a good number of *Life and Letters*. But it is well worth watching and gives us an opportunity to see what the distinguished refugees think of the war. Thus Stefan Zweig praises Brazil. 'The visitor who has just escaped from Europe's crazily exaggerated irritability is at first incredulous at the total absence of all spitefulness in public as in private life.' Let that be a lesson to us all. Huxley contributes an interesting essay, and Isherwood a review of Hemingway's fine new novel, in which he makes his position more clear. 'They (the lovers) have a long way to go yet—how long, none of us can know—but they have found the upward, evolutionary path, and they will not miss it again; they are free of Time for always. Two members of the Lost Generation are no longer astray; and they have left a trail which we others, if we are brave enough, can follow.' Auden and the Editor provide good reviews. There is no doubt the mind of Auden is a loss to us, he should be exchanged for some of our invasion hacks, Sunday strategists, and blockade bores.

Another new magazine is *The Bell*, a literary monthly published in Dublin and edited by Sean O'Faolain. It aims at realism, its



danger is provincialism (the fault of all Dublin enterprises), but it is good reading and contains literally no mention of the war. History will be very annoyed indeed. *Poetry and the People* (not very good poetry, for not very many people) has now become *Our Time*, edited by Randall Swingler, John Banting, Beatrix Lehmann. It supports the people's government. A long new poem by Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', appeared in the *New English Weekly* for February 27th, and there is a rough account of the whereabouts of French writers and painters and well-known German refugees in the current *Partisan Review*.

*Horizon* will publish shortly *Mildenhall Church*, a collaboration between John Piper and John Betjeman, a day in the life of a pilot, merchant seaman, and London fireman, for the War Symposium; critical essays by A. J. A. Symons on Wilde at Oxford, Martin Turnell on Baudelaire, and Tom Harrisson on War Books, a ballad by Dylan Thomas, and a long new instalment of the Autobiography of Augustus John.

To the *Spectator*, and the many *Horizon* readers who have objected to Orwell's review of Wavell's *Allenby*, the Editor would like to point out that the review was written in the early summer, at a time when, after France, the title of general was unreassuring, and when Orwell had no inkling that the biographer of Allenby was to prove greater than his subject. It was several months before space could be found for it, and Mr. Orwell states that he was mistaken about General Wavell, and is glad he was mistaken, sorry to have made the mistake.



D. S. SAVAGE

## FEBRUARY

Ebbs from soiled fields the last drab vestige of snow,  
Through February's veils the hazy distance looms.  
In sunken woods no melancholy horn is blown,  
Only an invisible process of decay consumes.

I have sat at this window and watched the day  
Consumed, as though its substance were a powdering wood  
In whose grey embers the origin of all decay  
Smouldered, as it patiently smoulders within my blood.

Rotting vegetation, a leaf like a leather glove,  
A glove or a fleshless hand, of a corpse or a tree;  
Excrement; a dead dog buried in a garden grave;  
I am all these, and all these moulder in me.

I am the limestone in the cave, the putrefying bone,  
The seashell mashed and splintered by the mechanical surf,  
The green, soft fallen tree-trunk, the crumbling stone,  
The waterlogged carrion under the thatch of turf.

The odour of mortality rises from the death of the day,  
Earth's subtle chemistry proceeds; water drips from the  
    boughs;  
Nourished on black corruption, warmed in the breath of  
    decay  
The seeds of Spring lie swelling in their soaking house.

LOUIS MACNEICE

## REFUGEES

With prune-dark eyes, thick lips, jostling each other  
These, disinterred from Europe, throng the deck  
To watch their hope heave up in steel and concrete  
Powerful but delicate as a swan's neck,

Thinking, each of them, the worst is over  
And we do not want any more to be prominent or rich,  
Only to be ourselves, to be unmolested  
And make ends meet—an ideal surely which

Here if anywhere is feasible. Their glances  
Like wavering antennæ feel  
Around the sliding limber towers of Wall Street  
And count the numbered docks and gingerly steal

Into the hinterland of their own future  
Behind this excessive annunciation of towers,  
Tracking their future selves through a continent of  
strangeness.

The liner moves to the magnet; the quay flowers

With faces of people's friends. But these are mostly  
Friendless and all they look to meet  
Is a secretary who holds his levée among ledgers,  
Tells them to take a chair and wait . . .

And meanwhile the city will go on, regardless  
Of any new arrival, trains like prayers  
Radiating from stations haughty as cathedrals,  
Tableaux of spring in milliners' windows, great affairs

Being endorsed on a vulcanite table, lines of washing  
Feebly garish among grimy brick and dour  
Iron fire-escapes; barrows of cement are rumbling  
Up airy planks; a florist adds a flower

To a bouquet that is bound for somebody's beloved  
Or for someone ill; in a sombre board-room great  
Problems wait to be solved or shelved. The city  
Goes on, but you, you will probably find, must wait  
Till something or other turns up. Something-or-Other  
Becomes an expected angel from the sky,  
But do not trust the sky, the blue that looks so candid  
Is non-committal, frigid as a harlot's eye.

Gangways—the handclasp of the land. The resurrected,  
The brisk or resigned Lazaruses, who want  
Another chance, go trooping ashore. But chances  
Are dubious. Fate is stingy, recalcitrant,

And officialdom greets them blankly as they fumble  
Their foreign-looking baggage; they still feel  
The movement of the ship while through their imagination  
The seen and the unheard-of constellations wheel.

New York, *September 1940.*

## KENNETH ALLOTT

### POEM

Only people are real: the cloud-washed mountain chain  
With its cincture of lakes and trees is too much the same,  
Persistent in unchanging identity,  
And the kingdoms of beast and insect respire forever,  
The phantom reek of meek and mere carnality.  
The screes snow up, the hedgehogs sleep, the deciduous  
favourites

Expel their gross Victorian family of sons  
To fight their way in the winter world of time,  
Below the uncertain line where we begin,  
And, where beginning, we will soon complain,  
And the rare Mount Athos of the saddening reason.

People and faces change: the outlawed instincts deploy  
On the fluid terrain of lineament as rage or joy.



They break the back of the map in a decade  
 With booby traps and decapitation of shade,  
 For the young in front of a mirror, waltzing, whispering 'I,  
   I, I,'

Faster than statues weather may change that cry,  
 Waking to read a letter, waking to find the snow  
 Nuzzling the ruins of summer, friends  
 Unintelligible like Ogham stones; and they  
 Will be changed like Saul near Damascus to pursue other ends.

Change is real. I grow old: I suffer, therefore I am.  
 We cannot go on shining like piston or pin,  
 For age is simply a haymow turn with time.  
 The mountain is worried and sculptured like a bone,  
 The chuckling precipitous river  
 Works down to boring base-level, but both are as young as ever,  
 Unconscious of the guerrillas of circumstance.  
 And the twilight animal world merely goes on,  
 Meal-time and seed-time in pre-adamite innocence.  
 Strict as the bombing death which comes out of the sun  
 The carnivore leaps in his red continuum  
 Till he falls to pieces like a decrepit machine.  
 The kite, hyena and cockchafer  
 Cannot say 'I regret' or 'I prefer',  
 Swaddled in the pang and needle-eye of sense.

People are real and suffer. They cannot forgive  
 The friend who succeeds or the foe who dies. They are lost  
   making love.

Not one has grown to his height or looks without shame  
 For some itching habit or lie which still makes him turn  
 His pillow to find the cool side of negation.  
 Not one but fears God the Father round a corner,  
 The whiskered dominie and lord of timepieces.  
 Not one but dreams of freedom as the good time,  
 Passionately drinking champagne and starting again.  
 Never at ease from the womb to the grave  
 With always wanting what he will not let himself have.  
 Afraid of his sex and his mind,  
 Afraid to dream and dreaming he is afraid,  
 Foolish and pathetic, unstable and primly alive,

Remembering things as they were not and hating now,  
Hiding heartache with suaviter modo and savoir faire,  
Martyrs of the tiny genitals and the dome-like brow,  
Drifting like feathers down to the mist-hidden weir.

People are changed by suffering. The brittle and hard are broken,  
The too fond, clinging and suppliant are forsaken.  
The eye must reach the stars to be at peace.  
The hot tears will not renew desire.

He who expects nothing is satisfied,  
Though delight be real in the artefacts of love,  
Breaking the holy prism of unit-heaven,  
Fire and the sacred runes and gentle precision,  
The pinnacle, the concerto, the economy of the hive,  
The grave phantasm over the kitchen-midden  
Issuing from the heads of those drooping like barley,  
Who surrendered corroding comfort and the termite life  
To read the grim message of the galaxies  
The word from impersonal space was: to grieve and to give.

Suffering is real: thwarting into thought,  
Striking the mirror of self and sense,  
Breaking even the best with remote heat,  
Punching sick the dandy of intelligence,  
Wakening silence out of extravagance,  
Leaving Cicero to burble, Lorenzo still to riot  
With silk and Greek and excrement,  
To choose the fiord-deeps of what is meant  
Where the starved heart-engine thumps,  
But never to forget the human faces and graces,  
The pleasures and dancing measures, never to try to be  
The sneering eagle above the Khyber passes  
Of the spirit's high places, or the unmemoried sea;  
But common still in the commonwealth of pain  
Always to continue to wish them all well  
And not fall sick too often of honour or duty,  
But come back for punishment simply again and again;  
Not rise to despise, and so to despair  
Even of earth and air, but to regard and prize  
Who comes to torture or who comes to care.

J. B. PRIESTLEY

## PROLOGUE TO PLANNING

THIS periodical is to publish during the next few months a series of articles by experts on planning for post-war reconstruction. It has been left to me, who am no expert, to introduce the series. The best way I can do this is to clear the ground a little for the advance of the more knowledgeable minds.

Some people cry, rather querulously, 'Why all this talk of planning? Get on with the war first.' Now I would agree with them if, as they sometimes appear to imagine, this talk of planning meant some slackening of our war effort, as if pilots refused to enter their machines and soldiers would not turn out for guard duty because they were all busy having a nice chat about post-war conditions. But of course it is not like that at all. Nobody is neglecting war duties to discuss planning. The better the world they see ahead of them, the more likely men are to fight hard for it. What ruins morale is a general feeling of dreariness and hopelessness. Nazi propaganda can have a roaring good time setting to work on any nation lost in cynicism, doubt, apathy. Create a faith in the future everywhere, and the war is half-won.

For my part I do not trust the man who promises to do everything for me after the war so long as nothing is changed or even discussed now. I suspect that once Hitler is out of the way and the danger to property is past, he will ask me not to talk nonsense about reconstruction, but to go and mind my own business. (If you are a writer, instead of being a banker or a brewer, it is not your business to meddle in politics.) The other day a correspondent sent me an appeal he had received from the chairman of his local Conservative Party Association, and I must say that several phrases in this appeal only confirmed my suspicion of this don't-bother-me-until-after-the-war attitude.

Whether the war ends very soon or lasts a horrible long time, it is equally important that we should be planning now. But for different reasons. If the war ends quite soon, with a sudden collapse of Hitler's crazy rickety empire of despair, then we are all left in mid-air, probably wondering how we came to be up



there. Without any plans for immediate reconstruction we shall find ourselves in a chaos. It will be necessary to improvise very rapidly merely to establish some kind of new peace time order. There is no doubt that the general mood of this country favours progressive and fairly thorough reform, a remodelling of the whole political, economic and social structure, and is suspicious of the diehards. But it is frightening to find oneself in mid-air above a chaos. Something must be done at once. Better anything than nothing. Thus if we are not careful we shall find ourselves back in August 1939, with the same old voices talking the same old drivel, all as it was before, except that now the government in power will have a good deal of unrepealed wartime legislation to help it quieten any real opposition.

On the other hand, if the war lasts as long as the Great War, and we have done no planning for reconstruction, then disaster will follow the peace, as it did last time, simply because nobody will be lively and up-and-doing but the crooks. The rest of us will be suffering from a profound mental and spiritual exhaustion. The 'hard-faced men' do not suffer in this fashion, the years of ruin and horror not having the same effect upon them. While the good folk are wearily searching for ink and paper for the blueprints of the new world, the gangs will have moved in again and will be posting sentries. Therefore the blueprints must already exist. And the people must be told that they already exist, that disinterested men and women have been at work on their behalf.

The people feel instinctively that the time has come when their affairs should be handled by disinterested persons, that is, by persons whose first care is the quality of life lived by the community, and not by men who want to acquire power in order to further the interests of a small group. The reason why some of us, who make no claim to have exceptional experience of or insight into public affairs, are read and listened to so eagerly and widely by the people is simply because the people feel that at least we are disinterested and not working any racket. We may be wise or we may be foolish, but at least, they feel, we are honestly on their side. The importance of this change in the public mind can hardly be exaggerated. And already it is beginning to bewilder and anger the diehards.

I am certain that the churchmen, scientists, technicians, educationists, thinkers invited by *Horizon* to produce their plans to win

the war and the peace will be, in this sense, disinterested persons, whose one desire is to stop this muddling and wallowing from one vast tragic farce to the next. They will, of course, make mistakes. Many of the problems of our time are genuinely complicated and so not to be solved by a few simple strokes. But it is a mistake to assume, as some pessimists do assume, that we have not the intelligence to solve them. There is, in fact, plenty of intelligence about. Unfortunately much of it is wrongly directed, having been acquired by the brigands and the pirates and the gangs. The failure, then, is one of good will? No, there is also plenty of good will about, as I think this war on the whole has proved. But much of this good will has little intelligence to direct. It cannot function in public affairs. What is urgently needed there is a combination of intelligence *and* good will.

This is chiefly to be found, in my experience, in the types of men and women mentioned above as future contributors to this series. That is why we must look to them for guidance. Not, you will observe, 'leadership'. I am rather suspicious of these cries for 'leadership', if only because I am disinclined by temperament either to lead or be led, preferring, as a genuine democrat should, to co-operate. People who cannot pull together to get something done but can only scream for a leader deserve all that comes to them, and we know what that is.

One final point. There are new men emerging, men who are not experts and whose names may be unknown to the general public, but men, usually youngish fellows, whose jobs as air-raid wardens, shelter marshals, and the like, have severely tested their characters and enormously enlarged their knowledge of the ordinary folk around who trust and admire them. I hope some of these new men will be asked to contribute to this series, for I doubt if any voices in this discussion of plans for reconstruction will be better worth hearing than theirs.

H. G. WELLS

# FUNDAMENTAL REALITIES

It is impossible to discuss the outcome of the present war at all hopelessly or usefully unless certain fundamental realities are continually borne in mind. The first of these is the complete change in the conditions of human life that has occurred since the beginning of the century. There has been an abolition of distance, so that events are now practically present and simultaneous throughout the planet, and such a release of material and human energy as to make the pre-existing control of human affairs by a patchwork of independent sovereign governments increasingly ineffective and dangerous in the face of large-scale profiteering private enterprise and terroristic gangsterism. Three broad necessities face man. He has to secure himself against a new sort of warfare that is rapidly destroying the moral and material fabric of his civilisation, he has to protect world resources from exhaustion by short-sighted exploitation for private profit, and he has to extend the protection of a common basic law to all mankind. The first necessity can be met only by the establishment of a federal world control of the air and its associated services and supplies; the second by a federal conservation of world resources, and the third by accepting such a statement as the Sankey Declaration of Human Rights as the fundamental law of the world. None of these things was even practicable fifty years ago. They are now imperative, if the present collapse of human affairs into disorder and degeneration without limit is to be arrested. No schemes and constructive forecasts can be taken seriously which do not fall within the requirements of this three-fold programme. The world has become one—and this is no metaphor, but a primary political fact. We can no longer parcel out human affairs and talk about the Future of *our* Empire or the Future of Britain except as a contributory part of the whole problem of mankind. We have to be continually on our guard against lapsing back into historical traditional ways of thinking in this respect. All existing political and administrative authority throughout the world is provisional, pending the development of



world federal organisations. Their common future is a merger. Britain is for mankind and not mankind for Britain. If these essentials can be presented forcibly and clearly to men's minds, if they can be sustained and spread by a lucid and vigorous educational propaganda, so that they become the directive creative form of politics everywhere, there is hope for mankind. But there is no hope if intelligent English-speaking people, of whom the readers of *Horizon* are a sample, muddle up the issues by shifting their standpoints to and fro between the general and the particular, if they hide these broad ruling conceptions beneath a tangle of secondary suggestions of all sorts and sizes. The world at large wants a clear lead, and it is from the artists, writers and teachers, to whom *Horizon* appeals, that plain directives must come, if they are to come at all. People do not want a collection of odd parts and makeshifts from us. They do not want—how can I put it?—something like a rummage sale from the mental contents of a humane, liberal minded but patriotic and sentimental vicar with one son in the Civil Service, one in India and one in the Air Force. In the present crisis of human affairs, a well-meaning programme of quasi-progressive shreds and patches can easily be more mischievous, by distracting and dispersing energy and good will, than deliberate opposition. The threefold way as we have stated it is the plain way for rational mankind in common, and we cannot make it too clear.

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### THE WAR & THE FUTURE

The articles in this issue by J. B. Priestley and H. G. Wells introduce a new series for which the following articles have been arranged: Julian Huxley on 'Colonies'; H. N. Brailsford on 'The Balkans'; Colonel J. Wedgwood, M.P., on 'Anglo-American Co-operation'; A. L. Rouse on 'Democracy'; Paul Lafitte on 'Social Services'; Herbert Read on 'The Arts'; Professor Dodd (Regius Professor at Oxford) on 'The Structure of Education'; O. Burleigh (Headmaster of Charterhouse) on 'Public Schools' and there will also be articles on the Church, Elementary Education, Education in the Armed Forces, the Position of Scientists in Society, Civil Liberties and Architecture.

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T. S. ELIOT

## A MESSAGE TO THE FISH

ON January 14, having read the obituary notice of James Joyce which had appeared in *The Times* of that morning, I addressed to the Editor of that paper the following letter:

SIR,

I hope that you will permit me to submit one or two cautious qualifications to your interesting obituary notice of my friend Mr. James Joyce. That Joyce failed to appreciate 'the eternal and serene beauty of nature' can, I think, be disputed by reference to several passages in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*; but being separated from my books, I cannot quote chapter and verse. As for his inability to appreciate 'the higher sides of human character', this stricture would, perhaps, be more applicable to Jonathan Swift, and I should ask the reader, before accepting such a judgement, to consider 'The Dead', in *Dubliners*—one of the finest short stories in the language.

What I chiefly question, however, is the importance at this date of the opinions of men older than Joyce, holding the views of an older literary generation, such as Edmund Gosse, Arnold Bennett, or Æ. To some of Joyce's younger contemporaries, like myself, *Ulysses* still seems the most considerable work of imagination in English in our time, comparable in importance (though in little else) with the work of Marcel Proust. I do not believe that posterity will be able to controvert this judgement, though it may be able to demonstrate the relative insignificance of the literary achievement of the whole period.

Your obedient servant, etc.

As this letter was not published, I wrote a fortnight later to say that I presumed myself free to publish it elsewhere, and received a polite note from the Obituaries Department returning the letter, and expressing regret that restrictions of space had made publication impossible.

It was not a well-written letter, partly because I was ill with influenza when I wrote it. But its oddity is rather more due to the fact that I wished to write something that *The Times* would print and I entertained the hope that it might get by as an 'Appreciation'. Had I not been hampered by illness and a sense (however imperfect) of the possible, I might have written in somewhat the following vein:

SIR,

I have read with stupefaction your obituary notice on the greatest man of letters of my generation. It is usual, I believe, for editors of newspapers to have ready obituary notices of all notable men and women. This practice is wholly to be commended; but the notices should be written by the right person in the beginning, and should then be kept up to date. The impression given by your notice of Mr. Joyce is that it was written by someone considerably older than he—someone who by now must be well over fifty-nine. That it was in some sense brought up to date I must believe, since, being an obituary, it mentions the date and place of Joyce's death; but this does not cover the requirements. I am not alluding to oversights such as the failure to mention that 'Work in Progress' was eventually completed and published under the title of *Finnegans Wake*; I refer to the inclusion of trivialities about the man, and the failure to show any understanding of the significance of his work in its time.

I am quite aware that at the present time considerations of space are of first importance. For this reason I venture to point out how you might have saved space. Whatever the various distinctions of Sir Edmund Gosse, Arnold Bennett and Æ in other fields, none of them could lay claim to any authority as a critic; and phrases taken from what they said about Joyce many years ago could well have been spared. So could the estimate of your obituary writer. The first business of an obituary writer is to give the important facts about the life of the deceased, and to give some notion of the position which he enjoyed. He is not called upon to pronounce summary judgement (especially when his notice is unsigned), though it is part of his proper function, when his subject is a writer, to give some notion of what was thought of him by the best qualified critics.



of his time. I suggest also, in view of your limitations of space, that to mention that Joyce was one of 'a large and poor family' was unnecessary; and that a silly remark of his when a young man may give the reader the mistaken impression that vanity was the most conspicuous trait of his character, and the equally mistaken impression that we have the authority of Yeats for permission to ignore Joyce's work. And, as you did not have space to mention that *Ulysses* was eventually published in both England and America, it would perhaps have been better to omit mention of its previous suppression.

I must try to make quite clear that the issue which I raise has nothing to do with the difference between my valuation of Joyce's work and that of your writer. I am not concerned with matters of opinion, but with matters of fact; and were my opinion of Joyce still lower than that of your biographer, my condemnation of your notice would be the same. My motives in writing this letter extend much further than loyalty to a friend or desire to see justice done to a particular author. The name and fame of Joyce were known throughout the world: *The Times* has an equally wide reputation. I do not believe that your notice will much affect the world's opinion of Joyce; but I fear lest it may be used as evidence by those who choose to believe that England has lost respect for that one of the arts for which it has been chiefly renowned.

I am, yours, etc.,

T. S. ELIOT

# OURS NOT TO REASON WHY

*By A PRIVATE*

## CIVVY STREET

IN the Condemned Row the greatest breach of taste is to protest innocence. Moral questions are meaningless after the verdict. In the ante-chamber of death there is only one hope for innocent and guilty alike—Reprieve.

The change from civilian to Army life is almost as great. For the civilian there exists a complex of moral and political motives. Am I a coward? Am I right to seek exemption? How best can I serve my country, class, family or self? The civilian is an agent.

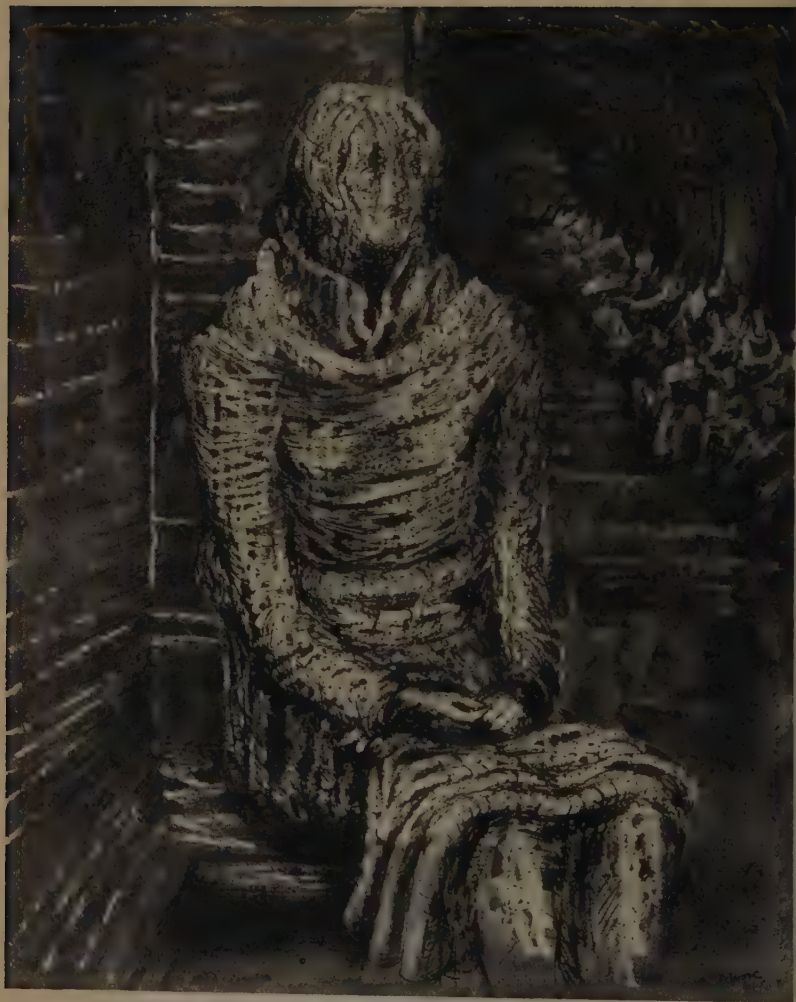
Strip off that mufti; put on the battle dress; make the agent a mere executant; and all these problems vanish, like cobwebs in candleflame. Conscript or volunteer, it makes no difference. The fish is hooked and struggles to get away.

It is not just mufti that we put off and pack in our bags to take home on our first leave: it is a hundred things, which civilians do not treasure because they take them for granted. Career, for example. I do not mean only the young architect or sculptor, taken from the work to which he has devoted years of thought, at the moment when he is beginning to find himself. I mean also the careers of the lorry-drivers and clerks and commercial travellers and bricklayers, personally as important as an artist's life work. Few civilians realize how much the casual contacts of their daily life mean to them: the friendship with the paper boy outside the suburban station, the waitress in the café, the regulars in the local pub. They make a social landscape in which the humblest civilian can freely move, an individual, sketched by his clothes, possessions and habits.

The same man, conscripted, is a number, two identification discs on a string round the neck, a uniform, and a military haircut. His dress, his feet, his hair, his face and his penis are inspected by authority. His standard of living is reduced, and what is even more important psychologically, his spending power is curtailed. Liberty of action is replaced by the authoritarianism of the detail.







Seated Figure in Tube Shelter: Henry Moore 1941

board. He cannot go where he wishes in his free time without a pass. He has to obey all orders he receives, even if they are foolish or unjust. (He may complain afterwards.) Initiative and will power, exercise of which gave him his greatest pleasure in life, now reside in higher authority. He is parted from his family, and stripped of his responsibilities. Civilians sometimes envy soldiers because they are assured of food, a small wage, rent and clothing. But there are few soldiers who would not surrender that meagre security in return for the demands which civilian life places on their resourcefulness.

In peace time the Army recruited men from those who had failed in civilian life, the bankrupts, love-lorn and misfits. The intelligence quotient of these recruits was not high, and rigid discipline was necessary to extort from them the unquestioning obedience on which the morale of a mercenary army is based.

We conscripts, however, had most of us succeeded in adjusting ourselves to civilian life. We held our jobs because we were good at them. We made our way in the world because we could think for ourselves. Our employers appreciated the fact that we could form our own judgements, instead of having to run to them for advice. We were paid for intelligence, not blind obedience.

We realize that fighting is a new job for us and, to start with, most of us are quite eager to learn. But we expect to be taught fighting as we were taught other trades, not as we were taught the Creed. As we are fighting for Democracy, we expect to be treated, not necessarily as equals but as thinking human beings. The military way of saying something is, 'You will do this'. We prefer the civilian way, 'You will do this, because. . . .'

We were everything under the sun in Civvy Street, dustmen, actors, scammell drivers, chartered accountants, shopkeepers. But it is amazing the unity which we develop, subjected to the same treatment. The Army tries to turn us into professional soldiers; but the formulæ based on training failures as mercenaries fail with us. Potentially we can be finer soldiers than the regulars; but only if methods are devised to use our full powers, our initiative, invention, resourcefulness. To the regular there may be comfort in the attitude, Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die. But the reason why is very important to us, if we have to do and die. The attempt to train responsible citizens as obedient mercenaries produces a state of mind which is either incomprehensible or

appalling to many civilians. On the one hand, the return to Civvy Street becomes the common dream: to get back into mufti almost at any cost. You should see our envy for the man with hammer toes, or flat feet, our admiration and good wishes to the chap trying to work his discharge by aggravating his duodenal ulcers. You should see the rapture with which a conscript goes back to work with the A.F.S. or the demolition squads. Of course it is back to the wife and the children, better wages, freedom of movement. But it is, also, back to a life of individual responsibility, a man whose name is more important than his registration number and whose thoughts can find expression in his work.

On the other hand, we accept the military position. If it is not ours to reason why, we shall refuse to reason why. We shall leave the head and heart aches of the war to our superiors. We shall be utterly irresponsible, doing exactly what we are told, no more and, if possible, less. We shall augment our wages whatever way we can, like true mercenaries, fighting because we are paid and are jailed if we desert. It is not *our* war; but *their* war, 'they' being vaguely our officers with cars and cultured accents, the politicians and the big business men, the people who write the tripe about us that we read in daily newspapers.

One day 'they' will decide not to have a war any longer; some think it will be next month, others in 1950. But all wars must end sometime. Then we shall go back to Civvy Street, that spacious boulevard which our thoughts fill with benign sunlight. With what nostalgia we talk of Civvy Street, the lore of our trade, the names of roads in London suburbs, pubs we frequented, pigeons we bred for racing! So Adam and Eve must have talked of Eden after the expulsion. Our faces lighten and our voices grow vivid in the recollection of the past. But when we talk of the future after the war is over, our joy is suddenly shot with anxiety, the sort of terror the first couple would have felt, if God had told them they could return to the Garden.

## BEHIND THEM BLOODY GATES

Camps are usually surrounded with barbed wire and entered through guarded gates. Their encirclement is a necessary precaution against sabotage, Fifth Columnists, nosey parkers and nuns with sub-machine-guns up their skirts.



But to the soldier living behind the gates this purpose is often obscured by its secondary object, to prevent his going in or out of camp without permission. In his life he approximates more closely to an undesirable alien than to a civilian of his own nationality. The greatest difference between an army and an internment camp, he feels, is that the soldier has to work.

Civilians cannot imagine the difficulty which soldiers encounter in getting passes, the calculated humiliations imposed by company sergeant-majors who resent others going out while they stay in camp, the hours spent waiting to collect passes which have already been made out, the thought, the intrigue, and even the money spent on obtaining them. Yet the greater the delay, the more important it becomes to get beyond those bloody gates and walk through fields alone, free from the inquisition of military policemen paid four and threepence a day to be offensive, free from the danger of the sudden fatigue, the noise of a barrack room, the sight of Army huts.

Yet, however many passes you get, your life lies behind the gates. Communal living is the ineluctable condition of the soldier. Those who have been to boarding schools think they know communal life. Army life is coarser, more energetic but less brutal than in a boarding school. Our emotions are strong and simple. Sleeping, feeding and working together breeds comradeship. Each man has a mate. You exchange duties, make one another's beds, cover one another's absence. Yours is the alliance of two, within the structure of greater alliances, your platoon against other platoons, your regiment against other regiments, your fellow rankers against N.C.O.s, commissioned officers, coppers and red caps.

But after a time you notice a habit of your mates which irritates you. Maybe he lets his wind with bravado and always says, 'It must have been them beans.' Maybe it is his way of saying 'Them's fighting words, buddy,' when he can think of nothing else to say. It makes no difference. Whatever it is becomes focus of your hatred. With a passion you thought had died at five, you wait for him to repeat his offence, and when he does, it is like petrol flung on the fire of your rage. How you flare up! You could kill him, like a boot dragged over the floor and the shattered cockroach gummed to the boards by its white intestines.

We are being trained to kill, you see, and it is amazing how

quickly our instinct for murder, disciplined by civilization to lie quiet, gets up, vigorous, at encouragement. It is not so amazing that Jerry, the fellow conscript in another land, is not the only focus for our rifle sights. If bullets solve arguments, the brain ponders, why not dispute in lead with sergeant, C.S.M. and officers? Many old scores are paid on the battlefield.

You don't think like that in Civvy Street. But it comes naturally to us, the boys in battle dress. It's a gift, gift from the W.O., along with our rifles and the bayonets we are trained to stick in stuffed sacks. 'If you see a Jerry, lying wounded on the ground,' says the instructor, 'stick 'im, before you go on. The more dead Jerries there are, the better.'

Don't think we spend all day nursing murder. I just give you this to show how we are different. The annoyance which would pass in a moment becomes the impulse to kill. All emotions are exaggerated in the same way. Our greed, for example. You should see us at table, the knives scooping more than our share of butter, the spoons heaped with marmalade running on to the boards on the table, the bread cut so thick a man has to gnaw at it, like a dog at a knucklebone. We are afraid that we won't get enough, so we take too much; and two out of twelve go short. We believe that pot. brom. is put in our tea to keep our sexual appetites within bounds. But all our passion is directed towards food. Not women haunt our dreams, but eggs and bacon.

Living conditions in the Army are worse than in a boarding school, though better than in an O.T.C. camp. But the atmosphere of a barrack-room is gentler than a school dormitory. In boarding schools the spiritual welfare of the majority depends on feeling superior to a minority. The way he does his hair, traits of effeminacy, shyness or a hare-lip, denominate a boy for the persecution without which the children of the middle class lapse into self-criticism and doubt. But the only case I have seen of this, since I have been in the Army, was that of L. in my first training camp.

L. hated war more than any of us, and by changing his address he had succeeded in avoiding embodiment for six months. Even after he was caught he continued to resist passively, with the sullen obstinacy of a moke. He refused to wear uniform until the last possible moment. He would not march in step. He did everything wrong. He sassed the sergeant, shirked every fatigue he could, and made fun of everybody who was trying to make the

best of things. His only friend was a boy, who was the dead spit of Karloff in the part of Frankenstein, and who turned out to be half blind (the lucky bastard!). Boris and L. formed a deep friendship: it was the only time you saw them smile, as they mumbled about the war in a corner. It was curiously touching, the love of these two uncouth boys.

If L. had expressed himself better he might have carried others with him, for most felt as he did. But his was not an attractive personality. He suffered from both halitosis and body odour. I don't know if his best friend told him; but his enemies were too kind. They projected their anger on him, for expressing the loathing of war which they themselves suppressed. They bitterly resented his contempt for their efforts to make the best of things. Behind their hatred lay the anxiety of the crowd at finding someone different. But they made neither of the attacks which the boys of Lower V. B. would have made. They never accused him of being a Fifth Columnist and they never taunted him with his tinkling breath.

I do not know why this innate good taste is found in barrack rooms but not in boarding schools. Perhaps it is that the public and private lives of conscripts remain distinct, whereas the private ambitions of most schoolboys are merged with their public achievement. To make the Cricket Eleven or become a prefect may be a great personal triumph: to be made a sergeant is trivial, when violent death is the common fear of you and your comrades. Cowardice, the ultimate sin of schoolboys, is the common state of soldiers. The heroic attitudes, which survive in civil defence forces, are rare among us conscripts. For us, the simple struggle for survival, the immediate perspective of the present.

Our public life is one of strong primary sensations and emotions. There are times of physical suffering when our hands are so numb with cold that fingers feel brittle, or when our feet are blistered on route march and each step is needles jabbed into the flesh. There are moments of physical ecstasy, the fingers thawing out, fatigue coursing through the relaxed limbs, hot toast before a fire, or lying beyond *réveillé* on the warmth of a straw palliasse. Moments of delight, as when the order confining ninety per cent of troops to barracks was rescinded, and in thirty seconds the news, 'No more passes, no more passes', ran through the camp. It was like fire across dry grass the speed it spread. 'No more passes!' shouted



from barrack spider to spider, across the square, through the canteens and the billiard halls, loud voices and soft, high and low but the same note in all of joy and sudden relief. We could move without authority from behind the barbed wire into the town. We could walk into a pub. We could see strange faces, look at girls and laugh. There are moments of grief, as when the telegram came that F.'s mother was killed by a bomb, and we fell silent thinking of our own, when B. returned from London at the beginning of the Blitz and fell on his bed, crying, 'They wiped out the East End, they wiped it out,' when the Bren-gun carrier overturned and two men were pinned to death beneath it, or when the popular despatch rider crashed at the crossroads by the R.A.C. box and we collected money for his widow. Moments of happiness, singing and laughing, glad in the warm sun, lying in the grass looking up at the sky, sweating after a run, feeling the strength of our bodies.

The only terms which fit our public life are mystical. These emotions are shared by all of us, but belong to none. They are generated by living together, like the heat of two naked bodies lying together in a bed. And, beneath this corporate life, run our separate private lives, which seldom emerge in the daylight of the barrack room. We exist together, lubricating our contact with jokes and slogans and horseplay. But our minds are commanded by civilian interests, our families and friends, sports, hobbies, and the lore of a former trade. Standing in threes on the parade ground the thirty men, who act as one, are dreaming like thirty of their homes and the cabbage patch, tallyman and income-tax, the bombs raining on the just and the unjust.

But at night private thoughts come into the open. I often return to camp on a late pass and undress in the dark, by the light of matches or the dying glow of the stove. The air is warm and thick with the stench of feet. The others are asleep. With their battle dress they have slipped off their public lives and meet their private images in dreams. They talk in their sleep. It may be the fierce voice of argument, a childish whimper, the naked horror of a nightmare or a trailing vocative of love; but whatever the tone, it appears, as startling as a human face rising to the surface in a quiet pool, and disappears again as the sleeper turns on the iron slats of his bed and falls into a deeper sleep, relieved.

This barrack room is where we live by day. We dress and

undress, lie resting on the dirty palliasses between parades, write letters at the trestle table, play rummy, brag, or knock-out whist. We sing and squabble and brush our boots here, laugh and toast cheese and scan the *Daily Mirror* for news of London raids. That is our day life, a busy surface existence like little black beetles skimming on a pond. But sleep and darkness give cover to privy thoughts. They creep out like the mice that eat biscuits in our lockers the moment the watcher nods. The barrack room is like a confessional, when I tiptoe in at midnight and the mice scamper squeaking away, and the men break the foot-heavy air with their abrupt alarms.

### WHAT I LIKE

I don't take exercise unless I have to: never walk, if I can ride: run only to save time. I go to bed at midnight because no one stops up much later, and I get up as late as I can, because I love to lie in bed.

But at the same time I love the feeling of health which only hard physical work will give: and if I had the courage I would spend half my life working from 2 p.m. to dawn and sleeping the rest of the time. The routine which associates day with work and night with sleep may be useful, but it cramps a writer. For me, perhaps because my thoughts too are like the mice which grow bolder after dusk, night is the best time for work.

I thank the Army for breaking down my physical laziness and scattering the convention of fixed hours. When the body grows hard and muscles tighten, physical effort is a pleasure. It is good to feel as ravenous as a boy of fourteen, to walk with a spring in the foot and take even pleasure in physical exertion. It is even better to be forced to see each day dawn—who ever can rave of sunsets who knows the subtle ways the first light breaks across the sky and over the earth?—to be forced to watch from two to four in the morning the curious hallucinations of fatigue, which make bushes run up a hill and crouch like men, how tired eyes set the still night world moving. I am glad I know how it feels to work eight hours in the twenty-four, spaced out as 'two hours on and four hours off'. There is a comfort in being so fagged you can lie on iron slats and fall asleep.

The Army has taught me a new way of looking at landscape. Previously I thought in literary metaphor, pleased, for example,

to discover that the late light of the sun, caught on the backs of wheeling plovers, made them like drifting sheets of pink paper. Now metaphors are military. A man standing at six hundred yards looks like a post: kneeling at four hundred, with rifle in the aim, he might be a bush. It is a limited vocabulary. But it demands precise comparison, the reward of which may not be literature, but life itself.

I do not know whether others share these feelings, or whether they are the exclusive compensation of writers, those scavengers for whom no experience is completely worthless or completely unpleasant. We conscripts do not talk about things like these, or if we do, it's to say, 'I was healthy enough in Civvy Street, without the missus in bed every night and a whole skin, thank you very much.'

### THE SPIRIT OF TOC H

From the strain of a twenty-four-hour duty arises a new type of comradeship. During normal routine our sense of comradeship is what must be felt by a drove of sheep with the foreboding that the reason why they are being fattened up is because they are going to the slaughterhouse soon. But common endurance transmutes this comradeship. Jokes which relieve the tension are funnier than ever, and the alleviations, such as extra rations, are treasured luxuries. We are like men without cigarettes but with a dozen bottles of whisky, at the same time rich and poor.

Long after these duties are over we recall them in conversation. They remain in memory, and sentiment endows what at the time was most unpleasant with the greatest glamour. From links such as these is forged the chain which binds ex-service men together. The old fighters sacramentalize their agony, strange dissimilars discovering a kinship in a common ordeal.

Yet to those who never shared in that experience, this resurrection of past suffering appears in curiously bad taste. It is as if Christ on the Road to Emmaus had sentimentalized His suffering on the Cross.

### THE SERGEANT'S HANGOVER

We lead a corporate existence, shared by all but belonging to none. The vital organ of this corporation is the leader. He is the heart,

the brain, or both. The quality of a leader is even more important than the training of his men.

You see this in drill. Good drill depends not just on the word of command being audible or delivered on the right foot. The tone of the voice creates its own reaction. The performance of two different platoons under the same N.C.O. has more in common than the performance of the same platoon under two different N.C.O.s. It is impossible for a platoon, however efficient, to drill smartly under an N.C.O. with a blurred word of command. It is as if the men had weights on their arms and legs. They are hypnotized by his lethargy.

I hate this mystical terminology. But the relation of leader and led is as close as brain and limbs. More contagious than clap, fear or courage, doubt or confidence can spread from a leader through his body of men. The image of his faults and virtues is stamped on those beneath him. Away from his command they may regain their individuality; but under it he is like a drug in their veins, that may stimulate or stupefy, but cannot be countered by will. If the sergeant gets drunk at night, the next morning his men have a hangover.

## SIX GOLDEN RULES FOR RAW RECRUITS

1. Do everything which you can't avoid briskly, smartly and efficiently, remembering that the majority of fatigues are given to those who look as if they don't want to do them.

2. Train yourself to assess the characters of those in authority over you. Everyone has his weakness. Do not despise crude appeals to snobbery, greed or sentiment. Never refuse to lend money to an N.C.O.—once. He has committed a crime in borrowing and you can get what you like out of him. Do not forget that sometimes the best way to get something is to pretend not to want it.

3. If you can't 'wangle' what you want, surrender with a good grace. If an N.C.O. won't or can't cover you, you stand very little chance of getting by on your own.

4. If you make a bargain with an N.C.O., keep it at whatever cost to yourself. Otherwise you'll get him into trouble and yourself as well.



5. Pretend to punctiliousness of procedure, even to the point of idiocy. The man who appears overcareful not to transgress any of the Army rules can get away with twice as much as the man who doesn't give a damn.

6. When you feel despondent, remember that there is a way of getting almost anything you want in the Army, but the way is always tortuous and obscure.

## THE HEROIC ATTITUDE

In the defence forces the heroic attitude persists. Men and women face death with courage, at the Wardens' Post and the Auxiliary Fire sub-station, spotting planes and fires from roofs, treating the wounded in the streets. For Day-Lewis, 'peering out for invaders', there is a fine unity in the Home Guard.

Destiny, History, Fortitude, Honour—all  
The words of the politicians seem too big or too small  
For the ragtag fighters of lane and shadow, the love that  
has grown

Familiar as working clothes, faithful as bone to bone.

What have they got, the ragtag fighters of lane and shadow, which the conscript army lacks?

Patriotism for us is not Parliament, the Lord Mayor of London, Royal Ascot or the British Empire. It is the house and street we live in, our families and friends, security and freedom of movement. For these we want to fight; we would give our lives to save our wives and children; we would run danger to succour the wounded; we would never let the invader land and live here.

But this is not our certain function. We do what we are told, or else jankers and the glasshouse. We are not the people's army, the ragtag fighters, but members of His Majesty's Forces, who go where they are ordered. It may be Libya, to take a desert from the Italians; or India, to arrest more friends of Mr. Nehru; or Poland, to assist the Poles to wreak vengeance on their oppressors. And the reason why we have not got the heroic attitude is because no one has persuaded us yet that dying on foreign soil is going to help Millie, and Daisy and Lou, back in Bermondsey; or even that it will help our sort of people in Prague, Cracow, Bruges, or Padua. We're willing to be convinced, but it will take more than words

to persuade us, more than the lovely promises that didn't fill our fathers' bellies when they were demobbed after the last war. Till we're convinced, we'll carry on the way we are, laughing with the infuriating sceptical laughter of the twice shy.

## LETTER FROM FRANCE

DEAREST COMRADE,

*October 1940*

When I first started this letter I meant to give as much news as I could about conditions in France at the present moment, and also to give some news of friends and of how personally we are getting on, and then throw it into the letter box as one throws a bottle into the sea. The B.B.C. tells us every day that these bottles occasionally reach the shores of 'the precious stone set in the silver sea', so I suppose there is an offchance it may slip through the censorship and reach you. On re-reading it, however, I consider it really too dangerous to mix public and private news, as the private part, however carefully veiled, might give a clue not only to my own identity but also to that of my informants. Living in a sub-totalitarian country one must obey, I suppose, the elementary rules of conspiracy. I have, therefore, destroyed the first page of this letter which gave news of many people whom you know, and for the moment will just say that everybody is all right, at any rate for the moment, although terribly anxious. We personally are well and get plenty to eat so far, though this is rather a struggle.

I am trying to cram into this letter everything I think may be of interest. In many ways, however, you are, no doubt, better informed than we are about what goes on in this country, as our Government of beaten generals, senile men of straw and common crooks, does its best to keep us in totalitarian darkness. Its moral and physical decrepitude, however, is too great for the black-out to be very efficient, and some items come my way which may be of interest to you. If the French censorship opens this letter, of course it will never reach you, unless the censor is a partisan of de Gaulle, which, considering all one hears, seems quite possible. Should the British censor open it, he will, I trust, excuse the absence of signature (of course you may communicate my name to the British authorities if they ask for it) and pass it on to you

after examination. If it reaches you, will you acknowledge it by a postcard by air mail via Lisbon with a 3½d. stamp and signed by some other name than yours?<sup>1</sup> In this way the present letter will be, I think, quite untraceable.

Well, to start with my immediate surroundings: Nice, of course, is the shadow of its former self, but an enormously distended shadow, as everybody who has a little money and has been able to escape from the occupied zone comes to live here, so the town is packed and our life is more social than ever, as streams of people pass through this house, all of them with strange tales to tell, and most of them off their heads with frenzy. The stories of the collapse and catastrophic retreat of the army in June, and of the ten million refugees on the roads as described by those who saw it, are really terrifying. One young woman I know spent three days in a train packed with women and babies without food or water and under continual bombardment. Another, who had a little car, spent seven hours crossing a bridge. Many who were lucky enough to have a car camped in it for days, but thousands had to abandon their cars for lack of petrol and had to continue on foot. Most people assert that the planes really did machine-gun civilians, but it is said that it was chiefly the Italian Air Force which was operating with the Germans that attacked the refugees. Of course, the routed and disintegrating army was so mixed up with the refugees that it was difficult to distinguish between them, and the French artillery had frequently to shell their own people, who were between them and the enemy, particularly on the Loire. The general disorganization,<sup>†</sup> collapse and panic, seem to have been beyond anything, the anger, demoralization and despair of the Army complete. Yet at no time did this take revolutionary forms and the defeat brought no defeatism, except possibly among the High Command. Although the Army entered an unpopular war without enthusiasm, it was far from ripe for revolt, and the blow when it came was too sudden and smashing to provoke anything but panic. Of course, the bourgeoisie accuses the soldiers of cowardice, and the soldiers retort by accusing the generals of treachery; but from all serious accounts it would seem that until their arms were exhausted (which, of course, happened pretty

<sup>1</sup> To my real address, of course! Our old friend Mr. Silas P. Higginbotham exists only in the pages of our immortal Charleston masterpiece. I just put him on the back of the envelope to amuse the censor!

quickly—after the departure of the R.A.F., for instance, all agree that not a single friendly plane was seen) the Army fought courageously, and that their commanders were more stupid and incompetent than treacherous. It is said that when the front was broken at Sedan, Gamelin simply shut himself up in his room, only remarking in answer to all inquiries, 'Nous sommes foutus, foutus, foutus, foutus. Il n'y a rien à faire, nous sommes foutus.' An undeniably correct estimate. But I daresay you have heard even more of these stories than I have. What I have been able to glean about the present state of France may interest you more. By all accounts, Vichy during July, in the first flush of its glory, was a spectacle worth seeing. The crowd was, of course, terrific, and frequently Marshal Pétain, Giraudoux, Mistinguett and Doriot were to be met crammed into the same lift. Everyone had their meals publicly in the same restaurant, Pétain's table only being screened off like the beds of the dying in hospital. The general degradation, decomposition and complete prostration before the Nazis struck my informants—respectable bourgeois of the old school—with horrified amazement. The generals and admirals were chiefly occupied in abusing the English, throwing as much responsibility for the catastrophe as possible on to them and predicting their speedy defeat. The R.A.F. would only bomb their own objectives, the British High Command insisted on rushing into Belgium, against Weygand's advice (on his first journey), the British Army would not obey orders, etc., etc. How much truth, if any, there is in all this will only be known after the world revolution, but emanating from such sources, it is obviously suspect. At any rate, not one of these gentlemen backed the English to win, or even to hold out long, except, apparently, General Weygand, who was several times heard to remark that all was not over yet, and even to murmur something about sea power. The General seems to have been *limogé* since. Baudouin<sup>1</sup> was asserting that Germany would shortly land twenty divisions(!) in Great Britain, and that all would be over in a month.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baudouin's chief concern, however, would seem to be to carry out a business deal with Count Ciano, over the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway. They are the two principal shareholders.

<sup>2</sup> Since June, Vichy is reported to have considerably changed its tune. Not only is it contemplating a long war, but it is far from sure of a German victory. They may yet betray their new masters.



As for the 'constituent assembly', it was a highly animated gathering, lobbies thronged, discussions lively, but there was only one subject of conversation among these constitution makers—how to obtain, legally or otherwise, enough petrol for one's car; why had so-and-so been given 15 litres while someone else had only been given 10, in spite of his connections, and whether by applying to X or Y, one might not scrape together as much as 29 or 30. This enthralling subject was occasionally varied by stories about M. Lebrun at Bordeaux. M. Lebrun, it seems, was in a blue funk and had to be held down by his coat tails shrieking all the time, 'Je ne veux pas que Goering me trouve ici, il me saignerait comme un cochon!' In vain it was pointed out that the Marshal had kindly promised not to come into Bordeaux, and that anyway he had other fish to fry, M. Lebrun was always trying to escape through the window. As for the dreary subject of politics, it was never alluded to, being left entirely to M. Laval and the Nazis. Laval returned from his first journey to Paris very gloomy, told the press that 'la cure de Vichy continue', and presently rumours began to circulate that he had found the Germans surprisingly disagreeable, and that they had demanded the removal of several ministers from the Cabinet, among them Colson and Ybarnégaray. The ministers were accordingly removed, but that didn't seem to improve matters. The least repulsive and the only personally uncorrupted member of the Vichy gang is the dotty marshal who really believes he is regenerating France, but has a vague feeling there is something wrong somewhere. M. Bergery, who together with some authentic Social-Fascists constitutes the 'couverture de gauche' of the régime, was moved, in spite of his enthusiasm for the 'national revolution', to address an eloquent letter to Pétain, copies of which he handed out to anybody who would take them, in which he pointed out that it was going to be difficult to regenerate France with the aid of the Capitalist trusts, the Banque d'Indochine and the most corrupt politician in France. Rather to his surprise Pétain sent for him, received him very warmly, appeared much upset by his letter and declared that he had no intention of letting France be dominated by Capitalist trusts (!). As for Laval, he appeared to be under no illusions, referred to him as 'Un bel exemple de la décomposition Parlementaire' and 'un homme à sincérités successives', that he was obliged to have in his

Cabinet because he knew the ropes. He ended by vowing to deliver France from dishonesty and Capitalism. Amen. So much for Vichy. But what about the rest of France? Of course the first few weeks were a time of complete prostration. The terrible physical misery and material disorganization, together with a certain feeling of relief at getting out of a war that had never been popular, allowed the Vichy gang to get into their semblance of power and to change their allegiance from England to Germany amid general indifference. As the dominating power, England had been unpopular during the war among large sections of the population, and when the defeat and slave alliance with Germany came, the Laval Government, by an intense propaganda effort—their only real effort—attempted to switch popular feeling against England instead of against their own ruling class and the Nazis. This was helped by the ‘correct’ demeanour of the German officers and the sex-appeal of the German Army. This sort of propaganda seemed at first to be having a great success, and most of my friends seemed to believe that the French people were only too delighted at being oppressed by German Nazis and French Fascists out of ‘traditional’ hatred of the English people! I must say I never for a moment believed such arrant nonsense. The forces at work are very different and far more tremendous than vague historic memories and psychological leanings, and in the circumstances national sentiment must inevitably work for the British and against the Germans. But I must admit I did not think the tide would turn so quickly. The signs, however, are quite unmistakable and recognized by all now. In spite of propaganda, of censorship, of a press which is like the shadow of the *Stuermer*<sup>1</sup> or the *Voelkische Beobachter*, in spite of Churchill’s gaffes, the Laval-Pétain gang are not only openly despised and jeered at by all, but the English are now not only more popular than they were during the war, but are in a fair way to becoming more popular than at any time in modern history. The defence of

<sup>1</sup> The tremendous anti-Semitic campaign does not appear to be meeting with much success so far either. A few shop windows of Jewish shops have been broken here by Fascist boys, but the population is on the whole unenthusiastic. There was a meeting of police officials from all ‘departements’ of the free zone at Vichy a short time ago, and they unanimously signed a report discouraging the Government from its anti-Semitic campaign on the ground that public opinion was not ready for it.

London arouses real enthusiasm. The B.B.C. in French is listened to by *everybody*, and is a huge success. Many radio shops turn it full on, especially at 6.15, and sympathetic groups assemble in the street outside. Many people estimate de Gaulle's partisans at eighty per cent of the population. The other day a friend took a fairly long railway journey to do a job in the South-west. He came back amazed at the conversation in the third-class railway carriage. Everybody was violently anti-Government and pro-English, and expressed their views at the tops of their voices, except one poor old lady reading the *Action Française*, who was promptly silenced by the others. The next compartment joined in the fun and a good time was had by all. They all agreed that the B.B.C. was the only wireless worth listening to, and one enthusiastic female declared she went off into a *pâmoison* every time she heard the General's voice. On the return journey it was just the same, with the addition of two policemen who were among the most violent of the General's partisans. Of course all this applies to the so-called 'free' zone, but since starting this letter I have had reliable information from the occupied zone (it is surprising how many people and letters seem to slip through with safe-conducts or without) that things are just the same there, only more so. Apart from a few members of the bourgeoisie who are pro-Nazi, the man-in-the-street is violently anti-German and pro-English, and even more so the woman-in-the-queue, who has to wait hours for a little butter and a bit of meat, and then sees a German officer carry it off before her eyes. Although listening to the B.B.C. is an offence punishable by death, every soul in Paris listens to it. The attitude of the population towards the Germans is very cold and dignified, conversations in bars and such places extraordinarily outspoken. There is also (at any rate in the free zone) an important bourgeois opposition and pro-English party which includes many important men. We see a few of them now and then, and their fury against Vichy (which has usually deprived them of their posts) knows no bounds. One of them, who formerly held an important, indeed a key post, shouted out that 'on devrait le pendre, ce Pétain, le pendre, le pendre!' Others are slightly more moderate in their expressions, but scarcely in their feelings. As you see, the situation is fraught with possibilities. Of course this does not mean that these 'possibilities' will burst out at any moment. As long as the stifling Nazi oppression lasts, its



Shelterers in Underground: Henry Moore 1941





instrument, the Vichy gang, will continue to exercise their phantom Fascist domination under the protection of German bayonets and carry on as far as they can the black reaction begun during the war. But I have no doubt that great forces are working to swing the country to far greater upheavals than mere revolt against national oppression. Begun as a movement of national liberation, a revolt might well end in something very different. Already Vichy is trying to frighten its bourgeois opponents by warning them that an English victory might well result in the triumph of the Popular Front. That is putting it mildly. However, that is all in the future and will depend largely on the aid of the German workers and soldiers. The present is black enough. Imprisonments follow dismissals, and 'administrative internments' follow administrative purges. But all this you probably read about in your newspapers, and I daresay you are better informed than I am. Of our dear Stalinist friends I know nothing, nobody ever alludes to them, and they seem to be completely under a bushel, both the 'faithful', who, I suppose, were mostly in prison and have been left there, and the super-chauvinist section of the party, who have now joined them presumably. The authorities are in such a hurry to remove Jews and Socialists from the administration that they frequently appoint one Socialist Jew to a post from which they have just removed another. Thus appointments frequently last only twenty-four hours. The last victim is the prefect of the B.-du-R., M. Surleau,<sup>1</sup> supposed to be one of the ablest administrators in France, and who was neither a Jew nor a Socialist, but who was rude to an Italian. There are some very sinister rumours afoot just now about the total occupation of the country by the Germans, which some people think is imminent. In particular it would seem that in the U.S.A. it is believed that the Germans are about to occupy the Pyrenean frontier and the Mediterranean coast. Others think that they will merely demand the control of posts to foreign countries in return for opening the frontier between the two zones. (This is one of the reasons why I really must hurry up and send off this letter while there is still only the risk that it will fall into the hands of the French censor, not of the Gestapo.) Others declare that it is quite unnecessary for the Germans to occupy the whole country, and that they will prefer to leave the 'free' zone nominally under the

<sup>1</sup> Or rather, 'administrator of the town of Marseilles'.

authority of Pétain. This seems a possibility. Certainly their control of this zone is, one would have thought, quite enough for anybody. I have it on very good authority that about three ships on an average enter the port of Marseilles every day, and that a large percentage, if not all their cargoes, are seized by the German commission now in the town. It is commonly said in Nice that the Italians do the same in the port here, but that, though probable, is not certain. What is certain, though, is that these last few days several train-loads of artillery<sup>1</sup> have passed through Nice station in the direction of Italy (Ventimiglia, not Coni). Of course, there is no clause in the Armistice compelling France to give up war material to Italy (and in June we saw quantities of material on its way from the frontier to the interior of the country); but apart from possible secret clauses this may be material given up to the Germans, and that they are now sending to Italy possibly for Libya(?) There are said to be large numbers of Germans from the Rhineland now in France (and in particular in Nice), where they have been evacuated to escape from the R.A.F. bombardments. I have fairly good reason to believe that there are not only a few German officers (in civilian clothes) in Nice, but also some representatives of the Gestapo. This brings me to the nightmarish German refugee affair, which, of course, is now a thousand times worse than before. At the time of the German advance, in June, the French authorities interned all German men and women under seventy in various camps, mostly in that part of France which is now the free zone. Here conditions were extremely bad, and in some cases scandalous; but there was no real ill-treatment, except in the camp of Vernet, in the Pyrenees, where the real suspects were sent. Of course, they were all chiefly terrified that the Gestapo would appear and carry them all off. There were several suicides, among them Walter Hasenclever, a distinguished writer who took veronal and died at the camp des Milles, near Aix. Carl Einstein also committed suicide. On the whole the French officers behaved well and managed to conceal the presence of several political suspects from the Germans. However, when the Germans did appear in the camp they were simply officers of the Reichswehr, very well behaved, and who merely liberated the Nazi minority in the camps and did not seize any anti-Nazis. At the women's camp some of the ladies who were Nazis rushed

<sup>1</sup> And other war material, tanks, for example.

forward when a highly respectable-looking officer of high rank appeared, shrieking 'Heil Hitler!' and attempting to embrace him, but he warded them off with the greatest contempt. Meanwhile some of the other ladies who were not so Nazi were talking to the soldiers who accompanied him. These displayed the utmost cynicism about everything, referred to the Fuehrer as 'dieser Hitler', and the war as 'diese Schweinerei!' They appeared on the best of terms with the French soldiers, but rather envious of them for having finished with the war. These soldiers, it is true, were all men of round about forty. Well, after the German commissions had been round the camps, most of the internees were, after a good deal of delay and red tape, set free by the French, and most immediately made for Nice, where their real troubles began, for the Gestapo is now reported to be really on the prowl and they are desperately trying to get out of France. This is terribly difficult. The most eminent of the German refugees was warned unofficially to get out of the country, and his departure facilitated, but the others, unless very rich or very brave and active, are caught here like rats in a trap. They get U.S.A. or Mexican visas relatively easy, but the French 'visa de sortie' is practically impossible to come by, and as the French police is obviously obeying German orders, this is very disquieting. The French, again obviously acting under German orders, have now begun to re-intern able-bodied men.<sup>1</sup> They have also forbidden this departement to all foreigners who did not live here before the war. The reason for this measure is unknown, but some think it is so that the Germans from Germany who come here shall not run the risk of corruption, Rassenschande, etc. At any rate, the wretched émigrés are terrified, besides being mostly on their last legs financially. If it is difficult for foreigners to get out of the country, it is impossible for Frenchmen of military age, so much so that the other day three men were arrested here for having tried to sell a Czecho-Slovak passport to a young Frenchman. The only hope is to get somehow to North Africa. There it is sometimes possible to get a boat for Portugal. Another horror of a different nature is the fate of the unfortunate Belgians. A great

<sup>1</sup> I have just heard from a 'usually reliable source' that the French authorities are about to intern all German refugees, men and women alike, once more. As this would obviously be under Nazi orders it is disquieting. However, the decree has not yet come out and it may be a mistaken report.



many who started off for Belgium with all their papers in order had to turn back at the line of demarcation on being warned by the French and Belgian authorities, and also by some of their compatriots who had managed to escape, that the Germans, a few miles beyond the demarcation line, stopped the trains, took out all the able-bodied men and put them into another train for an unknown destination.<sup>1</sup>

As for the Italians, they are not very obtrusive, except for a few motor-cyclists. One of these, it is true, knocked down a woman in the Place Garibaldi the other day and then discharged his sub-machine into the crowd that was booing him, but he only succeeded in killing one woman and wounding a few others, and was severely reprimanded by his superiors. This little incident was completely censored in the local Press, but everybody knows about it. As for the war on this front, it was, of course, a miniature affair, but not without interest for the strategist, perhaps! The Italians showed themselves quite incapable of achieving any real success against a heavily outnumbered and already defeated enemy, who, however, had a properly fortified line and defended it with some energy and common sense. The Italians are supposed to have had five divisions along the frontier of the A.M., and had to replace three of them at the end of ten days. They outnumbered the French by three to one, say some, by six to one, say others. The capture of Menton was a foolish and bloody affair. The French had only outposts at Menton and fell back the moment the Italians attacked. The Italians marched into Menton, banners flying, and singing Fascist songs. They chiefly consisted of small children of seventeen and eighteen. The moment they had entered Menton the French heavy artillery on the Mont Agel, Mont Gros, etc., and numerous machine-gun nests on the low hills round Menton began to fire. The Italians were unprepared for this, it would seem (it sounds almost too idiotic), and had no proper cover. They lost several thousand men, some say as much as ten thousand. This is obviously an overestimate, but the figure of three or four thousand is very likely correct. Menton, of course, suffered heavily. The Italians tried to attack the French 'line of resistance', but failed everywhere. French losses on the positions

<sup>1</sup> This has now stopped, and Belgians are beginning to go back again. It is said to have lasted only a week and to have been ordered by a German colonel who was in a bad temper.

behind Menton amounted only to a handful of men. In the middle of this came the Armistice, to the unmitigated fury of the officers of the Alpine army, and left the Italians in possession of the somewhat battered town of Menton, plus a little territory they managed to steal after the Armistice, the whole amounting roughly to the territory of the commune of Menton. They are now occupied in strutting about round Menton 'embellishing' and planting flower beds on the ruins of their conquest. After the Armistice the French troops had a jolly time looting in all the evacuated villages, Roquebrune, Roquebillière, St. Martin, Vésubie, etc. They were chiefly Sénégalais, but it was not the Sénégalais who looted, but their white officers, who carried off anything of value they could lay their hands on, broke into numerous houses, stole garments, pictures, etc., and wantonly destroyed and hacked about much of the furnishings, etc., that they could not carry off. They ended by shitting everywhere, leaving decomposing rabbits lying about and turning all the garden taps on. In general, the looting in this war has been enormous. The routed French Army looted, the refugees looted (and who can blame them), the English did their bit, especially in Belgium, the German looting was on such a colossal scale that nobody noticed it at first, but now the fact is percolating.

I see that this epic letter has failed so far to mention by far the most important subject of thoughts and conversation: how to get enough to eat. Well, on the whole the bourgeoisie, at any rate at Nice (including us), still manages to overeat heavily, in fact most people agree that they eat more than before. The rationing, however, is certainly stringent, and the quantities very small. The worst is milk, which is only given to children here— $\frac{3}{4}$  litre—(it is abundant in the country), and soap, of which we only get 100 grms. a month. However, skim milk is promised us some day. . . . The bread ration (350 grms. a day) is more than enough for us, but only about a third of a workman's normal consumption. Our meat ration (60 grms.) is quite enough for us, but not for a growing boy. Sugar ( $\frac{1}{2}$  kilo a month) is just enough. No rice at all, which is hard for all. For several weeks there were no potatoes, which was awful; now they are rationed at a pound a week per head, which is better than nothing. The fat ration is small, but sufficient (450 grms. a month). No butter, no coffee. But eggs are plentiful and there is still more fruit and vegetables

in Nice than in the whole of London. The shops are still bursting with delicious cakes four days a week. Of course prices are soaring and will soon, no doubt, reach inflationary heights, and as nobody has any money or any hope of earning any, goodness knows what will become of us all. But, for the moment, everybody is hanging on and eating while they still can. As for the material situation of the masses, it will soon, I think, become intolerable. This, indeed, is our only hope. Not a very jolly one, I admit.

I need not tell you that the tragedy in Mexico has affected me at least as much as anything else. Yet more than ever I put my faith in the doctrines and predictions of the prophet and martyr. For the rest, our chief concern is you all, our chief hardship being cut off from you at such a moment, our chief desire to know how you are bearing up, what you are all doing. The least speck of news is treasured.

I suppose I should end with 'Heil de Gaulle!', but instead send my fondest love.

P.S. As after expurgating this letter of all private news leaves me with a certain amount of space, I add a few more details and various miscellaneous items that have come my way since starting it.

All the latest information from the occupied zone tends to confirm all I have said about the state of public opinion there. The Germans are very well behaved, and often, as one informant put it, 'give lessons in good manners to the French' by giving up their seat in the Metro and helping old ladies cross the road. They are extremely handsome and 'impeccable' in their 'tenue'. They have so far arrested no French citizen. All this, however, avails them not a whit, and the only people they have won over are the French police (who, perhaps, are merely terrified), restaurant keepers, who are servile to the German officers, and a few members of the bourgeoisie. The overwhelming majority of the people hate them more every day and throw on to them the whole responsibility for all the terrible privations they are enduring. The popularity of the English naturally grows steadily, and the number of British agents is said to be enormous, many of them French. This, of course, in spite of the propaganda poured forth by the German controlled Paris Press. All German 'affiches' are torn off

the walls. The anti-Semitic campaign is meeting with no success at all, for there is no hatred to spare for the Jews. People are far too busy writing anti-German remarks on the walls to have time to write 'Mort aux juifs'. The general atmosphere of Paris is, all agree, almost intolerably oppressive. The vast numbers of German uniforms, the empty streets (many of the smart ones roped off for military car-parks), the queues, the lack of food, the poverty, the unhappiness, the deep hatred. . . .

I have been able to glance through a few Paris papers. They are certainly worth a glance. They are far more taken up with abusing the Pétain Government than even with abusing the Jews or the English. One of them had a satirical poem entitled 'En Pétainie'.

The food situation is really rather bad (I refer now to the unoccupied zone). Nice is certainly a privileged place, yet things are difficult enough even here, as it is often impossible to obtain even the extremely small rations allowed us. This is particularly true of fats, coffee (ersatz, of course), and soap. The ration of macaroni (250 grms. a month) is about what a Niçois normally eats at one meal, and when this amount was announced there was almost a revolution here, and they had to allow a slight mitigation of the law. But what will happen this winter when there are no more vegetables and the pastry-cooks have come to an end of their stocks of fat, sugar, and chocolate, I shudder to think of. Potatoes have entirely vanished again. Meanwhile the hotels, at any rate for the moment, are well supplied with what everybody else lacks—coffee, butter, jam, chocolate, etc. There is beginning to be a serious shortage of manufactured objects, especially things made of steel, cotton, rayon, or which contain fats. Cotton thread, stockings, razor blades, needles, cosmetics, shaving sticks and such like, are hard to find. So are matches. And the fun is only just beginning!

Last minute news from Vichy (from an absolutely reliable source) reports that Laval and Bergery are at loggerheads. Laval is on very bad terms with Pétain, and indeed with everybody else at Vichy. Even his colleagues hate and despise him, but he enjoys the support (if one may put it that way) of Wiesbaden. And as everything Vichy does, every act, every decree, every nomination or dismissal, even the most insignificant, has to be passed by Wiesbaden, who threatens complete occupation of the whole country down to the smallest village at the least sign of resistance,



Laval, of course, has easily downed Bergery, although Bergery is on good terms with Pétain. Pétain's last 'message', which, instead of being simply gaga, was a succession of sophisms extracted from *La Flèche* of two years ago, cleverly strung together and served hot with a Fascist sauce, was, of course, by Bergery, who was to have broadcast it himself as secretary of the single Social-Fascist National Party, but the quarrel with Laval obliged him to hand it over to Pétain.

There is nothing new to report about the German refugees. No general internment has yet been decreed against them, and I daresay will not be, though various individuals are being interned, almost at haphazard it would seem. But they are all in a dither, of course. A delegation of the German Armistice Commission arrived at Nice yesterday to join the Italians. Why? Is it to carry out Clause 19 of the Armistice—the most dishonouring of all the clauses? Possibly.

Fraternal salutations from your old comrade.

## DIANA WITHERBY ABNORMALITY

THE girls trudged up the gravel drive, over the wet stones and past the dripping evergreens, the games mistress behind them, walking with two left-overs whom nobody else would partner. She admired herself in her short gym. tunic, walking as though a spiral spring was attached to each foot, but in a beige felt hat and mackintosh she felt uneasy and shrunken.

'You must all be very quick, tea is in a quarter of an hour,' she said crossly, and the girls scattered.

Jocelyn Jebb, with three other girls, ran faster than the majority, they had to go under the road through a chalk tunnel which led to the Third, and smallest, House. The First House had single rooms and was filled with the richest girls, the Second House was dark and rambling, *but no one must go into anyone else's cubicle or room.* The cubicle curtains, therefore, were drawn thoroughly; in each room three or four girls rustled, shook talcum powder and changed into white blouses and skirts with black stockings and shoes.

'Help! the bell!' There was a hollow rushing sound as the Third House ran through the damp tunnel, but Jocelyn was not ready. As she burst into the dining room grace had been said, and the games mistress pointed to an exercise book on the sideboard. Each 'late mark' meant half an hour on your bed during free time on Saturday and, as every minute of the day at Flint Wall School was mapped out except at week-ends, it was a wearisome punishment.

Jocelyn sat down next to Margot Skinner, who, at the head of the table, was aloofly priggish, her mouth set in a virginity which hangs round many English faces even when they are married and have children. She was in charge of the chapel, and when she polished the resined pews her beaky face resembled the brass bird which stood with wings forever pinned by an enormous Bible.

'The old girl doesn't seem to smile except when she's prancing round the games field,' said Jocelyn. 'That's my second late mark this week.'

Margot Skinner did not answer.

Jocelyn was in form 4B, known as the 'dud' form. All the backward, stupid or dotty girls were lumped together, and were the only girls in the school to learn cooking and domestic economy. Jocelyn was more intelligent than her companions, but she liked them, they were easygoing and suffering from various glandular deficiencies. Mary Dilke, sitting on her other side, was also in 4B; she was one of the prettier girls and instinctively made friends with the influential mistresses.

She smiled at Jocelyn. 'I was just saying that the birthrate was getting so much lower and so many more people are dying that soon there will hardly be anyone left in England if we have to fight another war.' It was her mother's remark and she took no interest in it whatsoever.

'How do you know many more people are dying?'

'Well, you've only got to look at the "Deaths" in the *Times* to see that they take up more and more space.'

'My dear Mary,' smirked Margot Skinner, 'surely you don't think that everybody who dies has their name in the *Times*?'

Suddenly everyone in the room stood up and there was silence, except for the harsh giggle of Lavinia Holmwood, who had not noticed the entrance of the headmistress, Miss Windsor.

“Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman. . . .” Who said that, Lavinia?

‘I don’t know, Miss Windsor.’

‘Shakespeare,’ answered Miss Windsor, moving further into the room, the girls stepping out of her way with exaggerated haste. None of the girls was ever again in the whole of her life to meet a personality so brilliant, so powerful, so terrifying, as that of their headmistress. Her face only had to appear at one of the glass panes let into each classroom door for an emotion of fear like a hangman’s bandage tied round the head, to constrict and paralyse whomsoever caught sight of it. Her favourites flourished; those she persecuted she hammered unyieldingly; they were different types, but all had a common quality of obstinacy, and Miss Windsor always won in the end. It is as easy to outwit a child mentally as physically, for their inexperience cannot include a knowledge of truth. To the young one thing is as true as another.

‘After tea I want everyone to fetch all their combs, slides, and anything tortoiseshell they possess, and line up in the medicine room, where Matron will test them over a lighted candle.’ She was gone, and there was a shuddering clatter as the girls sat down again. They were used to these sudden fads which developed after more vivid impressions than usual had been left by lecturers. The previous night ‘Fires and how to prevent them’ had been full of warnings as to the danger of the sun igniting celluloid.

Lining up after tea, in spite of their identical clothes, the girls became aggressively individual, chattering egotistically about their own tortoiseshell and ignoring everyone else’s. To a small child any inanimate object can be as important as a person, the chip in a chair or the dented brass knob on the bed are as deeply imprinted as a brother’s tears or grandmother’s smile. Gradually the focus changes, but in adolescence there is always left some of this link with personal possessions.

Jocelyn watched the comb and slide she had bought four years ago catch alight directly they were held over the flame.

‘One of the unlucky ones,’ said Matron jovially. What a waste of time, she thought. Even in the papers she had never heard of the sun being strong enough to set someone’s hair alight just because she wore a bit of celluloid.

‘I’ve got a hairbrush with a tortoiseshell handle, but I’m damned

'If I'm going to risk seeing that frizzle down to nothing,' muttered Jocelyn as she turned away.

'I hope you didn't swear, Jocelyn,' said Matron, uneasily. *What would happen if everyone swore?*

'Oh, no, Matron!'

As she ran the outside way to the large room where the two hours' evening preparation was done, the wind from the sea had turned into a gale. There was always a wind in Chalktown, and the school, high on the outskirts of the town, was held in a continual pressure, the icy gusts bursting through any crack they could find and swishing along the corridors. Her feet overturned the wet pebbles, but she no longer noticed that anything underfoot was bleak and ugly; the chalky paths, grey salty grass, muddy worm casts, and the green linoleum on the floors, became too familiar.

'There is no doubt,' Miss Windsor was saying in her drawing-room, 'Jocelyn has become great friends with Lavinia Holmwood and has a bad influence on her. They must be put in separate dining-rooms and houses next term, so that they cannot be too much together.'

The next morning there was no rain, and high clouds flew across the sky. Jocelyn, in Girl Guide uniform for her enrolment, was walking after breakfast by the playing field, learning by heart the notes at the back of 'Richard II'.

'The field's too wet for team practice,' said Angela Russell, striding past her, 'so we've got to run round the games field. Isn't it ghastly?'

'A good cure for constipation,' called Jocelyn after her. Not so good as having some free time in the day when one could go to the lavatory, thought Angela Russell; if only it was fine for the Saturday match, it was the last one of the term. . . .

Jocelyn answered all her literature questions correctly and was given ten marks. Miss Lyon was pleased. She did not like teaching the 'dud form', it was like beginning with a bright transfer, which, after pressing it eagerly on the waiting paper and drawing away one's hand, reproduced only a moth-eaten imprint, in dim peckled colours. The only other girl who had ten marks had been Lavinia Holmwood. Miss Lyon knew, but could not prove, that she had been cheating behind a pile of books at the back of the



room. Later on, Lavinia, who was being enrolled with Jocelyn, marched across the gravel and promised 'on her honour to do her best, to do her duty to God and the King, to help other people at all times and to obey the Guide Law,' saluting Miss Windsor, who was dressed, like Royalty, in the most senior uniform of the movement. *A Guide is kind to animals, a Guide is honourable in thought, word and deed.*

'I enrol you as a member of the Chaffinch patrol.' Miss Windsor's brown eyes were as hard as mahogany. While Jocelyn saluted she suddenly became frightened and wondered whether she was to be one of the persecuted. She turned sharply and followed her patrol leader, afterwards watching the headmistress's face, cold and white against the background of a hedgeless field where the long grass lay flat and shivering in the wind. The ceremony, however, was over, and the girls tramped away after a flag held by Margot Skinner.

The same evening, Jocelyn, before going to bed, was fetching hot water in a white enamel jug from the bathroom. She settled on the edge of the bath and joined in the gossip of four or five girls who were idly turning the taps on and off, postponing the moment of chilly undressing in their bedrooms. Their thin, rootless voices chattered about games, which friend had dropped the other, the mistresses' dowdy clothes, and the conversation was interspersed with high giggles. During a lull Mary Dilke walked in, her long plaits bouncing against her breasts.

'You're getting quite fat,' said one of the girls.

'My dear, it's simply awful, I'm getting so enormous up here,' she patted herself with her jug.

Jocelyn picked at a chip in the enamel.

'They'll do well to feed Peter's babies on,' she said in her definite voice.

'Oh, you are awful, Jocelyn!' screamed Mary; the rest of the girls laughed but they were shocked.

'Why aren't you all going to bed?' Margot Skinner stood suddenly at the door, in her expression the wild austerity of generations of bony puritans.

'Just because you're always late, Jocelyn, there's no need to encourage everyone else to do the same,' she went on.

'Oh, we were all here before Jocelyn came in!'

Margot waited until they had all filled their jugs and then banged the bathroom door behind the retreating, obstinate procession.

A week later Miss Windsor stumped up and down on the path beside the girls' gardens (narrow strips of earth with a few tiny plants in each, any normal sized plant would have overshadowed the whole strip), waiting for the next girl she was going to question.

'Windsor wants you at once, Angela, by our gardens.'

Angela Russell ran along, her heart palpitating like the gills of a fish. What had been found out?

'Ah, Angela,'—Miss Windsor was detached, staring at the flint wall—'I wanted to ask you something.'

'Yes, Miss Windsor.'

'I wanted to ask you about Jocelyn Jebb. Has she ever said anything vulgar to you? Anything about constipation?' So the remark repeated by chance in the classroom had reached the headmistress.

'She said running round the games field was a good cure for constipation.'

'She has said a great many extraordinary things. Were you there when she talked to Mary Dilke in the bathroom?' They were standing opposite Lavinia Holmwood's garden, it was covered with weeds and there was a hideous row of shells to mark its boundary.

'I am told also that she swears a great deal, but the gravity of her remark in the bathroom lies in the fact that she did not just say that Mary would be able to feed babies, but she mentioned a particular young man as the father of the babies. Did you hear the remark?'

'Yes, Miss Windsor.'

'Of course she's not normal. That's all I wanted to know.'

Angela Russell hurried away. Of course Jocelyn was not normal, she realized that now. One thing was as true as another.

Miss Windsor looked irritably at the shiny laurel bushes behind the wall, then she went in to write some letters.

Mrs. Jebb faced the headmistress and listened in astonishment to a catalogue of her daughter's vulgar remarks. She knew Jocelyn was outspoken, but could not believe she was abnormal. As the monologue continued, however, she found herself convinced that

it was quite right her daughter should leave at the end of the term, and that the other girls could only become coarse if she remained.

'As a matter of fact,' concluded Miss Windsor, 'she has seen the doctor here, and he advises a mental specialist.'

Mrs. Jebb stared in horror at the stony face opposite her. Jocelyn were mad! But the headmistress, though not hostile, was unsympathetic; to her the event was finished and done with, an unfortunate occurrence, but there had been others in the past, and she would probably have to deal with more in the future.

When Mrs. Jebb saw Jocelyn she did not tell her she would have to leave, but said there had been some trouble and the doctor did not think she was very well. Jocelyn could not understand and they parted in mutual bewilderment.

Memory rejects the days as quickly as possible, leaving only outstanding incidents to which are loosely attached impressions of the colour and weather. But there are some summer days which cannot be forgotten, the order is reversed, and incidents are themselves only remembered because of the beauty of the day. An unexpected heatwave broke into the spring, and the last day of the term was hot and sunny. As Jocelyn carried piles of shoes and clothes through the tunnel, with its potting-shed smell, up the stone steps and into her bedroom, everything was stamped with a vividness and stillness she was afterwards never to forget. Patricia Morris was packing her trunk and ticking off her clothes from a long list, but against the brilliant shafts of sun on the floor her pernickety movements seemed slow and lazy.

'Have you had any more rows with Windsor?' asked Patricia. She had been asked many questions and, after racking her brains, had been able to repeat a few 'vulgar' remarks Jocelyn had made.

'No more. Silly old fool.'

'One can't help admiring her though.' This affected remark was often made about the headmistress by the more social girls.

'She's a damned good teacher,' said Jocelyn.

Later in the afternoon, after lying in the sun she stumbled into the changing room looking for Lavinia. In the darkness of the room she was unable at first to see, mauve circles danced between her and the line of girls at the wash basins who were cleaning inkpots. (This drudgery fell to those who lost most order marks in the term.)

'I suppose Margot Skinner will work up a few tears in chapel as she's leaving,' said Jocelyn.

'Sylvia Wood won't cry,' said Lavinia. Her fingers were blue, and ink dribbled down the basin. She was in love with Sylvia, inned by the adoration of first love, which is unique in being wholehearted. All subsequent loves, however violent, leave a bit more of the heart untouched until there remains eventually only a small corner to be lost.

'I wonder if Windsor will pick on you next term,' went on Lavinia, thinking of next term without Sylvia Wood.

'I think she's off her nut.' Jocelyn left the bare changing room which, lined by rows of empty pegs, seemed large and silent.

The girls' heads against the bright window looked as disconnected from their bodies as leaves seen from below against a summer sky.

LOUIS MACNEICE

## TOUCHING AMERICA

LAST year—1940—I was in the U.S.A. from the end of January till the end of November. Inevitably I am now asked on all sides to tell people something about America. The first thing always to be said is that for a European to generalize about the U.S.A. on such short acquaintance is a sheer impertinence.

America, however, is always being generalized about, even by people who have never been there. There are, perhaps, two attitudes towards her which ought especially to be stigmatized: the *superior* attitude and the *adulatory*. (1) Just as Americans, generalizing from a tiny minority of British (their visitors) and from the pages of *Punch* and the *Times*, and certain English novels and plays and films, tend to think of Britain as an unspeakably taste-ridden nation consisting entirely of stuffed shirts and signed drudges, so English people, generalizing from the Hollywood films and from a caricatural conception of the older type of American globe-trotter, tend to think of America in terms rather of fantasy or farce—as a polylogue of cigars and bad



grammar or as one big pumpkin pie fairy story. (2) Latterly, owing to this war, which has turned the U.S.A. into the white hope of civilization, we find in some quarters that all the contours and jags of that very irregular country have been lost in an ocean of democratic whitewash. I will expand on these two points.

(1) Thanks to Hollywood, we think of the U.S.A. as a whirl of millionaires, hard-boiled business men; simple-minded toughs and free-living blondes—all of them housed in chromium. Thanks to such American literature as comes our way (lots of it fails to), we think of the typical American as a double-dyed materialist (in the popular sense of the word), very smart in practical affairs and very dumb in everything else, giving and taking hard knocks but quite insensitive. Streamlined extraverts. When you arrive in that country, however, you meet innumerable Americans as neurotic as yourself, even more thin-skinned and certainly no less concerned with spiritual values. There *are* Americans, as there are Englishmen, who are brassily self-assured, but, as a national characteristic, this brassy self-assurance is as much a myth as American efficiency or American sex-life. Many Americans can spare enough time from go-getting to have healthy doubts about themselves and their world. As for efficiency, alongside certain marvels of the machine age (the Hudson Parkway, for instance), there is a great deal of shoddiness and vagueness, of waste of time and energy (e.g. the postal system, some of the smaller railways, many of the small towns)—let alone the South, which I have not visited). As for sex, their bark is much more than their bite. While New York intellectuals will tell the most risqué stories before strangers and use all the four-letter words, most of them would be appalled by bedtime Bloomsbury. Similarly, in many of their co-educational universities, though the boys and girls spend a deal of time necking in cars, etc., nearly all the girls are virgins. A decade ago it may have been different: many things have passed with the speakeasy era.

(2) On my return in April 1939 from my first visit to the U.S.A. I was asked by a *British* citizen organizing a television programme about America to say a few big words at the end. On asking what these big words should be I found that I was expected to say approximately this—that Europe to-day, including Britain, is all washed up, that our one last hope is in the U.S.A., which is

the only true democracy. (Eyes West, all of you.) I answered that I did not think it true (a) that British democracy, very imperfect though it was, was hopelessly moribund; and (b) that the U.S.A. was a perfect, or even near perfect, democracy; didn't they know the way Americans dealt with strikes, didn't they know that over there there were very strong elements of Fascism and, in particular, of anti-Semitism? Oh, yes, they knew all that, but maybe they had better get someone else to say the few big words. Maybe they had. It is bad enough to see people in misfortune and danger exonerating themselves by finding a scapegoat. It is, perhaps, nearly as bad to see them gleefully flagellating themselves and turning in idolatrous hope to somebody else who is billed for their *deus ex machina*. The U.S.A. has for many people to-day become such a scape-sheep. Certainly we ought to be grateful that she exists, but this unrealistic adulation is not—in the long run—either flattering or expedient. Thus I was depressed in New York by the out-and-out Roosevelt-worship of many of the Central European refugees. Understandable, but unpractical. It is very possible that Roosevelt may turn out to have been the saviour of the 'western democracies'; that will not mean that he is either a superman or a perfect democrat. Americans themselves, since their war-scare, have tended to fall into a political Narcissism: wherever you go you hear Irving Berlin's song, 'God Bless America'. It must be remembered both by them and by us that 'Americanism' is not equivalent to Progress.

Having thus made clear that I suspect all gush about Americanism, I can say how much I like the country and most of the people. The visitor from these islands is continually being shocked—by the sponsored radio programmes, by the patent sadism of the police, by the American Business Man (monstrous hybrid of crook and baby), by the American Committee Women and patronesses, by the New York intelligentsia (even more self-conscious, more cliquy than the English), by the cellophaned drug store food, by the worship of the gadget, etc., etc.—but he is also continually being inspired and even enlightened. You meet so many people in all spheres who are curious about the world and whose wish to live has—for us—a novel intensity. Take American undergraduates: while they are naïve where their English (or, at least, their Oxford and Cambridge) counterparts are sophisticated, they can cope with situations which would leave the English

undergraduate childishly gaping. Again, though their educational standard is lower, their intellectual appetites are wider and healthier: you rarely meet an American student who is *blasé*. Perhaps the open air has something to do with it: there is such a lot of it there. (Skiing, for example, in America is a sport for clerks and workers.)

Now some extracts from my ten months' visit:

*Spring:* I spent the spring in Ithaca, in upper New York State, where I was lecturing at Cornell University. *There was snow on the ground for two months.* I lived—board and lodging free—in an institution founded by a millionaire engineer (rough diamond), who had made his money in gold mines and wished to enable future engineers to get themselves polished. So there were twenty-odd students (most of them no longer engineers) living for nothing in this very luxurious house while they took their courses at Cornell. Two or three members of the faculty, myself included, lived there too to contribute culture and uplift. Uplift was very important, for the Founder had specified: 'The purpose of this Association is to further the moral order of the Universe.' When these students had their weekly meeting to decide how to spend the (very considerable) community funds, someone every so often would drag in this question of the Universe. But nobody knew the answer. Nearly all these students, who were unusually intelligent, were at that time Isolationist. In arguments about the War they always had one ace—India.

*The Fall of France:* In our house at Cornell lived a Frenchman who had spent the spring sun-bathing on a balcony and making newspaper cuttings and learning by heart little facts from the American *Who's Who* (for he was a careerist; some day he might meet some of the *Who's Whos*, then he could make conversation). The week in which Paris fell was the week of Class Reunion: the campus was flooded with comic old business men dressed up as pierrots or God-knows-what, according to the dictates of their class committee, each of them wore a baby hat bearing the number of his class year—1925 or 1911, or 1899 or 1066. All were trying so hard to be boys again together. The Frenchman, having breakfast on a terrace outside the *cafeteria*, was repelled by this inopportune *bonhomie*. 'What is this?' he kept saying (his English was incorrect and florid). 'In this darkest hour of France's history. . .

What is this? They are *children*.' Then he would order himself a bowl of cereal and gaze into it with horror—'What is this? It is dog-soup.' And by his side, only too aptly, appeared a large dog of no known breed, with long white hair, pink eyes and a snipy impetuous face. 'Yes, it is dog-soup. For degenerate dogs. Like this one.' We had several such breakfasts together on this terrace, in a time of cantaloups and peonies, looking across the lake-valley to the low hills which, on a misty day, resembled an Irish landscape. 'Poète, prends ton luth,' he would say suddenly—for he never kept a step in conversation—or, with a histrionic gesture so that we took it for wit, 'La fin du monde. Merde!' A few days after I left I heard they had put him away in the State Asylum. Shortly before his removal he had explained to a friend of mine that he knew now he was not one of those whom God had chosen, it was not allowed to him ever to have initiative; from now on all he could do was obey—'Tell me something and I will do it. I want to *obey*. Set me a task—a hard one.'

*The Fall*: After six weeks in hospital I spent the autumn (the Fall is a better name when the maples go pimento and coral) convalescing, first in New England and then in New York. In my hospital a nurse had said to me: 'Of course it won't be so bad for England as for France. They've got some kind of a gulf over there, haven't they?'—meaning the English Channel. But now Europe had come closer and, what with the presidential election, America was bubbling with hysteria. In academic and intellectual circles this hysteria disguised itself as common sense or high-mindedness. Mr. Archibald MacLeish, having spent two decades on a series of band-wagons, had published a pamphlet entitled *The Irresponsibles*, in which he attributed the present world chaos to certain writers of the 'twenties, such as Hemingway, and suggested that, even if Hemingway and Co. had written the truth, they had no right to utter such truths because they led to defeatism. This piece of artistic treason (and nonsense) was properly answered by Mr. Edmund Wilson in *The New Republic*. Next, Dr. Nicolas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, called a mass meeting of his faculty and warned them that, if the U.S.A. went to war, there was to be no criticism of the Government line from anyone teaching at Columbia—they must either keep silence or resign. Again, there was a proper answer: the New York press raised such a stink that Dr. Butler had to recant. More



insidiously, however, a number of old Liberals, ex Fellow Travellers, etc., were issuing articles and books (and no doubt still are) abjuring the folly of rationalism and/or 'materialism', and offering as a panacea for world politics various brands of mushy but bad-tempered religion—or perhaps religiosity. At the same time Mr. Carl Sandburg explained that wisdom was to be found with the truck-drivers and not with the intellectuals. All this, in my opinion, is deplorable. Because it is both sentimental and cowardly. It may be good for an intelligentsia every so often to confess that 'there is no truth in us' but, after the catharsis of such humility, they should remember that there is damn little truth around anywhere, that truth—in the social and political, as in the artistic, sphere—is something which is made, or at least discovered, and that the intellectual has no right to abdicate his post of discoverer or to scrap the necessary instrument of Reason.

This dangerous tendency is not, of course, peculiar to America, and I have a hope that the intellects of America can stand up against it. As I said before, one thing about Americans—they are not *blasé*, they are not predisposed to the rôle of lost souls. And the re-election of President Roosevelt, in spite of the Third Term bogey, the superstitious oracles of Wall Street, the unnerving propaganda of the Press and all the appeals made by some of his opponents to the instincts of greed and panic, was—up to a point—a defeat for the forces of Unreason.

# GRAHAM GREENE

## HERBERT READ

SOME years ago Mr. Read published an account of his childhood under the title *The Innocent Eye*. It must have come as a surprise to many of his readers that the critic of *Art Now* was brought up on a Yorkshire farm: a whole world of the imagination seems to separate the vale, the orchard, the foldgarth, the mill and the stockyard—the fine simple stony architecture of his childhood—from what was to come, which one is tempted unfairly to picture as a long empty glossy gally with one abstraction by Mr. Ben Nicholson on the further wall, perhaps two Ideas and a Navel in clay by Mr. Hans Arp on a pedestal on the parquet, and a decoration of wires with little balls attached dangling from the ceiling.

‘The basin at times was very wide, especially in the clearness of a summer’s day; but as dusk fell it would suddenly contract, the misty hills would draw near, and with night they had clasped us close: the centre of the world had become a candle shining from the kitchen window. Inside, in the sitting-room where we spent most of our life, a lamp was lit, with a ground glass shade like a dull yellow moon. There we were bathed before the fire, said our prayers kneeling on the hearthrug, and then disappeared up the steep stairs lighted by a candle to bed.’

Now Mr. Read has written a sequel to *The Innocent Eye*,<sup>1</sup> taking the account of his own life on out of the Yorkshire vale; a grim partisan orphans’ school with a strong religious tone and the young Read absorbed in Rider Haggard; a clerkship in a Leeds Savings Bank at £20 a year, and the slightly older Read becoming Tory and reading Disraeli and Burke; then Leeds University and loss of faith, religious and political, and so the war, and after the literary career—and the settled literary personality, the agnostic, the anarchist and the romantic, bearing rather heavily the load of new knowledge and new art, the theories of Freud blurring the clear innocent eye. The first book was one of the finest evocations of childhood in our language: the second—finely written as it often is—records a rather dusty pilgrimage towards a dubious and uninteresting conclusion: ‘This book will attempt

<sup>1</sup>*Annals of Innocence and Experience* (Faber, 10s. 6d.)

to show how I have come to believe that the highest manifestation of the immanent will of the universe is the work of art'—sight giving place to thought: to abstractions which have not been abstracted but found ready-made—and in an odd way it doesn't quite ring true. There's an absence of humility, and no one can adequately write of his own life without humility. When Mr. Read, writing of his youth, remarks that 'in a few years there was scarcely any poem of any worth in my own language which I had not read'; when he writes of religion in a few dogmatic sentences as the phantasy of an after-life conceived in the fear of death, we have travelled a long way with him—too far—from the objective light of childhood and the first 'kill'. 'I do not remember the blood, nor the joking huntsmen; only the plumed breath of the horses, the jingle of their harness, the beads of dew and the white gossamer on the tangled hedge beside us.'

We have travelled too far, but we should never have known without *The Innocent Eye* quite how far we had travelled. That is the astounding thing—Mr. Read was able to go back, back from the intellectual atmosphere personified in Freud, Bergson, Croce, Dewey, Vivante, Scheller. . . . And if we examine his work there have always been phases when he has returned: the creative spirit has been more than usually separated in his case from the critical mind. (He admits himself in one essay that submitting to the creative impulse he has written poetry which owes nothing to his critical theories.) The critic, one feels, has sometimes been at pains to adapt the latest psychological theories before they have proved their validity—rather as certain Anglican churchmen leap for confirmation of their faith on the newest statement of an astronomer. But the creative spirit has remained tied to innocence. 'The only real experiences in life,' writes Mr. Read, 'being those lived with a virgin sensibility—so that we only hear a tone once, only see a colour once, see, hear, touch, taste and smell everything but once, the first time.' One of the differences between writers is this stock of innocence: the virgin sensibility in some cases lasts into middle age: in Mr. Read's case, we feel, as in so many of his generation, it died of the shock of war and personal loss. When the Armistice came: 'There were misty fields around us, and perhaps a pealing bell to celebrate our victory. But my heart was numb and my mind dismayed: I turned to the fields and walked away from all human contacts.' In

future there was to be no future: as a critic he was to be sometimes pantingly contemporary, and when he was most an artist he was to be furthest removed from his time.

'When most an artist': we are not permanently interested in any other aspect of Mr. Read's work. Anarchism means more to him than it will ever mean to his readers (in spite of that vigorous and sometimes deeply moving book, *Poetry and Anarchism*)—sometimes we suspect that it means little more to him than an attempt to show his Marxist critics that he too is a political animal, to give a kind of practical everyday expression to the 'sense of glory' which has served him ever since youth in place of a religious faith; and I cannot share his belief that criticism with the help of Freud will become a science, and a critical opinion have the universality of a scientific law. As an artist he will be assessed, it seems to me, by *The Innocent Eye*, by his only novel, *The Green Child*, by a few poems—notably 'The End of a War', by his study of Wordsworth, informed as it is by so personal a passion that it is lifted out of the category of criticism ('we both spring from the same yeoman stock of the Yorkshire dales, and I think I have a certain "empathetic" understanding of his personality which gives a sense of betrayal to anything I write about him'), and some scattered essays in which, too, the note of 'betrayal' is evident—the essays on Froissart, Malory and Vauvenargues in particular.

It is that author with whom we wish to dwell—however much lip service we may pay to books like *Art and Society*, *Art Now*, *Art and Industry* and the rest—the author who describes himself: 'In spite of my intellectual pretensions, I am by birth and tradition a peasant'. Even his political thought at its most appealing comes back to that sense of soil, is tethered to the Yorkshire farm—'real politics are local politics'. The result of separating Mr. Read's creative from his critical work has an odd effect—there is colour, warmth, glow, the passion which surrounds the 'sense of glory', and we seem far removed from the rather dry critic with his eyes fixed on the distinctions between the ego and the id. The mill where the hero of *The Green Child* rescues Siloën from the sullen bullying passion of Kneeshaw is his uncle's mill—just as the stream which had reversed its course is 'the mysterious water' which dived underground and re-emerged in his uncle's field. And it may not be too imaginative



to trace the dreadful sight that met Olivero's eyes through the mill window as Kneeshaw tried to force the Green Child to drink the blood of a newly-killed lamb to that occasion in the foldgarth when the child crushed his finger in the machine for crushing oil-cake. 'I fainted with the pain, and the horror of that dim milk-white panic is as ineffaceable as the scar which my flesh still bears.'

'Milk-white panic': like the Green Child himself Mr. Read has a horror of violence—a horror which preceded the war and did not follow it. The conflict always present in his work is between the fear and the glory—between the 'milk-white panic' and the vision which was felt by 'the solitary little alien in the streets of Leeds', the uncontrollable ambition which 'threw into the cloudy future an infinite ray in which there could always be seen, like a silver knight on a white steed, this unreal figure which was myself, riding to quixotic combats, attaining a blinding and indefinable glory.' If art is always the resolution of a combat, here is the source, one believes, of Mr. Read's finest work. Very far back—further than the author can take us—the conflict originated: it was already established when the machine closed, for when the small boy felt the excitement of *King Solomon's Mines* and *Montezuma's Daughter*. Both sides of the conflict are personified and expressed in a poem of the finest achievement—*The End of a War*, in which the sense of glory is put first into the mouth of a dying German officer and then into the dialogue between the soul and body of the girl whom the Germans had raped and murdered—the glory of surrender to nationality and to faith, and last the revulsion in the mouth of the English officer waking on the morning of peace and addressing his dead enemy—the revulsion of an ordinary man crushed by the machine who has no sense of glory in martial action or in positive faith, caught up in violence and patiently carrying out of the conflict only the empirical knowledge that he has at least survived.

The bells of hell ring ting-a-ling  
for you but not for me—for you  
whose gentian eyes stared from the cold  
impassive alp of death. You betrayed us  
at the last hour of the last day  
playing the game to the end,  
your smile the only comment

on the well-done deed. What mind  
 have you carried over the confines?  
 Your fair face was noble of its kind,  
 some visionary purpose cut the lines  
 clearly on that countenance.  
 But you are defeated: once again  
 the meek inherit the kingdom of God.  
 No might can win against this wandering  
 wavering grace of humble men.  
 You die, in all your power and pride:  
 I live, in my meekness justified.

Because we have detected a conflict between the sense of glory and the fear of violence it mustn't be thought that we have mistaken the meaning Mr. Read has attached to glory: glory, he has written many times, is not merely martial glory, or ambition. Glory is the radiance in which virtues flourish. The love of glory is the sanction of great deeds; all greatness and magnanimity proceed not from calculation but from an instinctive desire for the quality of glory. Glory is distinguished from fortune, because fortune exacts care; you must connive with your fellows and compromise yourself in a thousand ways to make sure of its fickle favours. Glory is gained directly, if one has the genius to deserve it: glory is sudden.'

In that sense glory is always surrender—the English officer also experienced glory in the completeness of his surrender to the machine: the 'wavering grace' too is glory. But just as the meaning of glory extends far beyond great deeds, so the fear of violence extends—to the same borders. Surrender of any kind seems a betrayal: the milk-white panic is felt at the idea of any self-revelation. The intellect strives to be impersonal, and the conflict becomes as extensive as life—life as the artist describes it to-day, empty of grace, of faith, of fervour and magnanimity'.

Glory in that sense cannot be attained by the artist, for glory is the cessation of conflict: it is private like death. The mystic, the soldier, even the politician can attain glory—the artist can only express his distant sense of it. In his novel, *The Green Child*, Mr. Read conveyed as he had never done before, even in *The End of a War*, that private sense of glory. We see it working inwards from political glory—from the ideal state which Olivero found in South

America back to the source of inspiration, the home of the 'innocent eye', back through fantasy to the dream of complete glory—the absolute surrender. Alone in his crystalline grotto, somewhere below the earth's surface, to which the Green Child led him, sinking through the water at the mill-stream's source, Olivero awaits death and petrification—the sense of sin which came between Wordsworth and his glory has been smoothed out, passion, the fear of death, all the motives of conflict have been eliminated as they had been from the dying German. Desire is limited to the desire of the final surrender, of becoming first rock, then crystal, of reaching permanency—ambition could hardly go further.

'When the hated breath at last left the human body, that body was carried to special caves, and then laid in troughs filled with the petrous water that dripped from roof and walls. There it remained until the body turned white and hard, until the eyes were glazed under the vitreous lids, and the hair of the head became like crisp snail-shells, the beard like a few jagged icicles. . . .'

It is the same sense of glory that impelled Christian writers to picture the City of God—both are fantasies, both are only expressions of a sense unattained by the author, both, therefore, are escapes: the solution of conflict can come no other way. The difference, of course, is that the Christian artist believes that his fantasy is somewhere attainable: the agnostic knows that no Green Child will ever really show him the way to absolute glory.

The difference—though for the living suffering man it represents all the difference between hell and purgatory—is not to us important. Christian faith might have borne poorer fruits than this sense of unattainable glory lodged in the child's brain on a Yorkshire farm forty years ago. Mr. Read's creative production has been small, but I doubt whether any novel, poem or work of criticism, is more likely to survive the present anarchy than *The Green Child*, *The End of a War*, and *Wordsworth*. The critic who has hailed so many new fashions in painting and literature has himself supplied standards of permanence by which they will be condemned.

# SELECTED NOTICES

*Home Guard for Victory!* By Hugh Slater. Gollancz. 2s. 6d.

The danger of a German invasion is no longer that it is likely to conquer England at one blow. Probably the Germans have lost their chance of doing that, and will not regain it unless British sea and air power can be worn away to almost nothing. The danger is that an invasion, not even intended to be successful in itself, might act as a huge scale nuisance raid, with paralysing effect. If the invasion happens, therefore, it is not a question of defeating it but of defeating it promptly, and in the first few hours the Home Guard may be all important. There has been much controversy about the political future of the Home Guard (democratic People's Army, or middle-class militia and plaything of Blimps), and no doubt it is unnecessary to say whereabouts in it Mr. Slater stands. His book is just as much a political pamphlet as a technical manual on tactics and the use of weapons. But he is too acute to say so: if he did, the special public he is aiming at would never think of reading him.

The sudden appearance of the Home Guard last summer was a democratic gesture. At the same time a local and part-time force of this kind is of necessity purely infantry, and the battles of the last year seem to suggest that infantry is now useless except to consolidate gains won by some other arm. Ever since the invention of the breech-loading gun the cause of democracy has become seemingly more and more hopeless, because the weapons that matter have necessarily been concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. We have now reached a stage when only five nations (Germany, Great Britain, the U.S.A., and more doubtfully the U.S.S.R. and Japan) are capable of waging prolonged war on the grand scale, and out of those five three are totalitarian states, and the other two will have to tamper with their democratic institutions in order to make themselves efficient for war. However, there is a possible democratic answer to the modern mechanized army: it is the nation in arms, defence in depth, and the reappearance of several primitive but effective weapons. The symbol of military despotism is the tank, the most terrifying object the human mind has ever contrived. Yet nearly any calibre of tank can be blown into the air by a grenade weighing only a few



pounds, always provided that there is someone brave enough to throw it. This again depends on political and social conditions, i.e. on the mass of the people feeling that they have something to fight for. We do not yet know whether this kind of popular resistance can be decisive, but what evidence there is suggests that it can at any rate make a great deal of difference. Unless the Home Guard are in some way sabotaged at the last moment—the authorities might, for instance, flinch from handing out weapons in the necessary quantities—they can at any rate slow up the concentration of any invading force, even if they do not achieve much when the real fighting starts.

If they achieve anything at all, however, it will be quite largely due to the efforts of Mr. Slater himself, and Tom Wintringham and his other associates at the various Home Guard training schools and, in general, of youngish men in the lower ranks of the organization who have seen fighting in recent years. One is not revealing any military secrets by saying that when it was first formed the Home Guard fell into the hands of decrepit Blimps appointed from above on purely social grounds, who would have killed it altogether if they had remained in control. Most of these elderly men struggled not only against the guerrilla conception of war but against any serious training in the use of modern weapons. Some of them actually wanted the Home Guard in town areas to be unarmed and to be maintained as an auxiliary police force for use against 'agitators'. A general in command of a very important area, addressing his men, started by saying that he had been a soldier forty years and went on to say that he 'didn't believe in all this crawling about on your belly.' Against this kind of thing the Osterley Park School acted as a valuable counter-irritant. Hundreds of men from all parts of the country passed through it every week, bringing away with them a view of war that derived from the battlefield and not from the parade ground. *Home Guard for Victory!* is, for the most part, a rearrangement of the lectures given there. Parts of it are rather elementary, others speculative or over-optimistic, and as a whole the book probably relies too much on the experience of the Spanish War. But it is packed full of useful information, and it is a magnificent anti-Blimp pamphlet. All that it says on street fighting, tank fighting, patrols, etc., implies the development of the Home Guard into a real People's Army, i.e. a force in which the men think for themselves, know what they

are fighting for, and are commanded by officers whom they have chosen—or, at any rate, whom they would choose if they were free to do so.

An important suggestion Mr. Slater makes towards the end of the book is that we should evolve some kind of formal drill based on modern war and not, like most of the drill in the British Army, on the wars of Frederick the Great. At this moment, with the German invasion possibly only a few weeks away, part-time volunteers in the Home Guard are wasting hours at a stretch on right turn, left turn, about turn and fixing bayonets by numbers. He also suggests a number of alterations in the status of the Home Guard, all implying further democratization. The most important of these are the setting up of a Home Guard Council on which civilians would predominate, and the introduction of paid personnel for the lower commissioned ranks. At present any rank above sergeant can, in practice, only be filled by someone with a fairly large income, and doubtless this was what was intended when it was announced at the start that the Home Guard would be entirely unpaid. It does not so much matter that this invariably brings people of bourgeois origin into positions of command—that tends to happen in any army, it happened even in the early Spanish militias, for instance—but it does matter that it gives special opportunities to the class of petty *rentiers* and ‘retired’ people which England has produced like a belt of fat during the years of finance-capital. These people still hold a majority of commands in the Home Guard. In any moment of emergency they would be pushed aside, but we do not want to pay for their incompetence with rivers of blood. They could be got rid of immediately if the Platoon and Company Commanders were paid salaries and chosen by examination.

The Home Guard mirrors fairly accurately the struggle—at some moments apparently hopeless, at other moments seeming to be almost won already—that is going on in England between democracy and privilege. This book is a powerful but subtle blow on the side of democracy. Simply by sticking to the technical side of war it demonstrates the military weakness of feudal states and the impossibility of opposing Fascism with anything except democratic Socialism. Even those who have no interest in military matters could read it with advantage as an exercise in indirect propaganda.

GEORGE ORWELL

*The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge.* A. J. Ayer. Macmillan 10/6

An excellent book, much more sensible than the author's first which was too blow-the-gaff. The liquid-flowing style might still have a bit more body in it. 'Philosophical problems are largely linguistic'; the term 'sense-datum' is 'convenient for his purposes' merely because it gives quick grammar for 'what we seem to perceive', so he will frustrate all attempts to treat a sense-datum as a 'thing'. But to a literary man his idea of the purposes that govern a choice of words seems naïve; there are generally several purposes at once, and even the chooser may not be clear about them till later.

Consider a man who looks at a picture and says 'This isn't the original, it's a copy', and suppose the reason can be said simply: two patches of red had different tones in the original but are alike in the copy. It is a characteristic of the human mind that this man can judge correctly about the difference of colour scheme before he has analysed it out. But in Mr. Ayer's terminology his judgment is not based on any sense-datum, because he doesn't 'seem to perceive' anything but an unlocated feeling of difference. This might be called a sense-datum, though we are told (page 135) that sense-data have to be located in space. But the word sense-datum, even when used by Mr. Ayer, suggests 'given by the senses' and implies that we can only build up our knowledge out of what our senses give. It works by an appeal to scientific rationalism, and Mr. Ayer feels that he is blowing away the nonsense of metaphysics. The whole development of rationalism since the sixteenth century has been playing round 'sense'. If Mr. Ayer will not let us say that this man is 'sensing' the difference of colour, he makes the term actively misleading. Tennyson believed in immortality because his heart felt it, evidently sense-datum of visceral type. Sense-data become opinions rather than perceptions.

In this book other people and the past are let exist. Any statement is viewed as reducible to infinite groups of statements about sense-data (for different positions of the observer, etc.), and 'the matter of the earth came out of the sun', or 'Tom feels tired', are about the sense-data one would receive if in logically possible positions (being in a spaceship a long time ago or being Tom now). The plain man may remark that the universe has been



sturdily indifferent for eons to the observers to whom its reality is reduced; Mr. Ayer will reply that we only *can* be referring to logically possible observations. But he seems very anthropomorphic about observers. Bees see ultra-violet light; perhaps birds feel the points of the compass; some people say atoms have dimensions—is it logically possible for me to be an atom? The objection to assertions about matter is that we can't conceivably observe it. How are we better off by reducing it to sense-data, which we can't conceive ourselves as having? Here again, we know less about the sense-data than we do about the things.

One impulse 'active in the phenomenalist' is a desire to push out of sight the immense queerness necessary in the universe before we can get any knowledge at all. There is nothing here about probability; why do we give a higher *a priori* probability to simpler scientific laws? Without that we could get nowhere. One might justify it simply because the universe is so big; though many different principles are likely to be at work, their effects are likely to be spread out into different orders of magnitude. But this brings in cause, over which Mr. Ayer dances in some excellent pages of history and psychology. He feels free there because he believes that modern physics agrees with him. There is curiously little in the chapter about the experience of pushing. It becomes strikingly perverse in the argument against Prof. Stout (page 187), where, of course, it was the archer himself who could *feel* the tension in the bow, not an outside observer. And we get nothing at all about Eddington's monumental book, in which he claims to calculate all the absolute physical constants, to any degree of accuracy, starting merely from the fact that the universe is one which can be observed by the creatures it contains. (He tends to say that we make it ourselves, which isn't the point; there may be innumerable other universes, but ours is the only one that could produce a book describing itself.) This is so Kantian, and so many of its results are actually used by modern physics, that Mr. Ayer can't get away with just ignoring it when he appeals to the physicists.

W. EMPSON

*Darkness at Noon.* By Arthur Koestler. Jonathan Cape. 8s.

To historians and psychologists of the future the Moscow Trials will always be a subject of mystery and conjecture. I hope that they will give credence to Arthur Koestler's composite portrait



of an old Bolshevik, Rubashov, then they will not be unfair to him, and will understand something of the spirit of the Communist régime and the conflicts of our time. Koestler's achievement lies in having conveyed with great psychological accuracy the mentality of the Communist Party. He does this as gradually as experience itself. By degrees one realizes the force of small past events, of the mere weight of years in the service of a cause, and how the pronoun 'I' becomes the single-minded 'we'. One sees a concentration of power so formidable that even those who oppose it can envisage no life or even death outside its grasp. Rubashov is one of those who were liquidated by public trial; that is to say he was persuaded without actual torture to accept the State's account of his case. Others less amenable were dealt with 'administratively'. Yet so convincing is Koestler's narrative that he can give every argument for uncompromising revolt and still not forfeit the reader's sympathy with Rubashov, who rejects this course.

Stalinists are more easily made than unmade. Many who have renounced the policy of 'No. 1' nevertheless feel inhibited from taking an alternative course. Such people will read this book with a feeling of relief, for it gives them a perspective which does not condemn but explains—and is the more damning in consequence. And these trials still go on. If other front page news were not more pressing we should be reading of the trials of Leningrad technicians and the purging of Moscow playwrights, each new piece of evidence making cynical nonsense of preceding trials.

*Darkness at Noon*, as well as being a deeply interesting study of the problem of justice, is a very fine novel, well written and translated. There are certain scenes which impress themselves dramatically on the memory, notably the execution of Bogrov and the conversation which follows between Rubashov and the clever and sympathetic Ivanov. This book makes frank demands on the reader's imagination; it is not for the lazy and untidy minded, and I hope it will get the wide public it deserves.

GWEN MARSH